

**ISRAELI STRATEGIC POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA, 1991–
2001:**

**CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN UZBEKISTAN AND
KAZAKHSTAN**

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ABSTRACT

The collapse of the Soviet Union created a new region of instability. The former republics of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are situated in a strategic region that has garnered the attention of numerous actors in a competition for influence in Central Asia. It also saw the entrance of a most unlikely player: Israel.

Since 1948, Israeli foreign policy has been directed at guaranteeing the security of the nation. Israel responded to the emergence of an independent Central Asia by evaluating the region's potential to impact its security and engaging the region to prevent the emergence of hostile regimes.

Israel's strategic objectives in the region were to block Iranian inroads and to expand Israel's sphere of influence in order to secure the survival of the Israeli state. By constructively engaging Central Asia in diplomatic, economic, and security relations, Israel exerted its influence over the region. In the first ten years of independence, Israel achieved all its objectives.

This thesis examines the reasons behind Israel's interests and evaluates its successes. It will explain what threat perceptions drove Israel's relationship with these states and evaluate these possible threats. This will be accomplished through an examination of the relationship and an evaluation of its successes in the advancement of Israeli national security interests.

The focus of this study will be on the complex and multifaceted relations between Israel and the republics of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. This study will examine Israel's multifaceted relationship with these two republics within the framework of Israel's overall nation security policy and foreign policy objectives. This thesis will explore and evaluate Israel's principal relations with these states, including diplomatic relations, development assistance, commercial relations, and security cooperation. These aspects of the relationship will be explored in order to trace Israel's interest and exposure.

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C.B.
London, Summer 2006

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

It is my intention to provide clear and coherent analysis throughout this study; the following measures were taken to facilitate that process.

For the sake of clarity, I have used the most common and clearly understood English language spellings of names and places originally written in a variety of languages and scripts.

The writing of this thesis benefited my MA dissertation (SOAS, 1999). The arguments in that work served as a starting point to inform some of the basic notions used in the examinations of Israeli-Uzbek and Israeli-Kazakh relations presented in this thesis. A very preliminary version of chapter four appeared as "The Impact of Israeli Foreign Policy in Central Asia: The Case of Uzbekistan," in *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 4, no. 28 (2004): pp. 70-81.

GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

BBC SWB	British Broadcasting Corporation, Summary of World Broadcasts
CICA	Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia
CIMTA	Conference on Interaction and Measures of Trust in Asia
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
<i>Gadna (Gedudei Noar)</i>	Israeli youth corps run by Ministry of Defense for pre-military training of teenagers
<i>Hakim</i>	governor (<i>Uzbek</i>)
HEU	highly enriched uranium
IDF	Israel Defense Force
IFTRIC	Israeli Foreign Trade Risks Insurance Corporation
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
kibbutzim	Israeli collective farms
Knesset	Israel's parliament
MK	Member of Knesset
MASHAV	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Center for International Cooperation
Mazhilis	Kazakh parliament
<i>moshavim</i>	communal cooperative villages
Mossad	Israel's external intelligence agency
<i>Nahal (No'ar Halutz Lohem)</i>	Fighting Pioneer Youth; combination of agricultural work and military service
NAM	Nonaligned Movement
NIS	Newly Independent States
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NTD	Nuclear Trafficking Database
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
Oily Majlis	Uzbek parliament
OSCA	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Asia
PKK	<i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan</i> , the Kurdistan Workers Party
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestine National Council
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WMD	Weapon of Mass Destruction

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 created instability in Central Asia. The republics of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are situated in an area where several regional powers converge: Russia, China, India, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey. The region is also rich in minerals, perhaps even containing enough hydrocarbon resources to rival those of the Persian Gulf. Highly strategic, Central Asia has attracted the attention of its neighbors and more distant powers. In the competition for influence in Central Asia, a renewed 'Great Game,' a most unlikely player has joined the struggle: the State of Israel.

Since Israel was created, it has crafted a foreign policy whose primary objectives include guaranteeing the security of the nation. Israel has engaged its regional Muslim neighbors because of their potential to adversely affect the national security of the Jewish state. When nominally Muslim republics were formed in Central Asia, Israel immediately attempted to build relationships with them in order to advance its traditional foreign policy objectives and to safeguard its national security.

Israel's strategic objective in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was to prevent the emergence of regimes that would be hostile to Israeli interests. Through a policy of constructive engagement with the republics, Israel hoped to accomplish four main goals: block the expansion of Iran's sphere of influence into Central Asia, halt the proliferation of Soviet-era weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), prevent the spread

of militant Islamist extremism, and ensure that the new governments in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan did not align against Israel on the issue of Palestine. In order to accomplish these and other objectives, Israel created strong relationships with the republics through diplomatic relations, development assistance, economic and commercial relations, and security cooperation. As a result of its strategy and engagement, Israel had achieved all its strategic policy goals in the region by the end of the first ten years of Central Asian independence.

The focus of this study will be on the complex, multifaceted, and significant relations between the State of Israel and the newly independent states of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. It is a case study of these two republics to explore and explain Israel's regional policies. This thesis examines the reasons behind Israel's interests and evaluates its successes. It details what threat perceptions drove Israel's relationship with these states and evaluates those threats. Several aspects of the relationships which Israel developed with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are analyzed in order to evaluate Israel's success in each of the two case studies. Through the framework of Israel's overall national security policy and foreign policy objectives, Israeli policy towards Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will be explored.

ISRAEL'S PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 dramatically altered the geopolitical landscape throughout the world. In Israel, the unfolding events in Central Asia were being watched with particular interest. Israel's greatest fear at the time was that the new republics would fall under the sway of Iran's fiery brand of revolutionary Islam and adopt Teheran's fierce opposition to the very existence of the Jewish State.

Israel's policy of constructive engagement on many levels sought to prevent Iranian influence from spreading to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Israeli leaders were also concerned about the potential proliferation of Soviet-era WMDs, their components, and technologies. The fact that when Kazakhstan gained its independence it became a de facto nuclear power certainly raised serious concerns throughout Israel's foreign policy community. The Soviet Union's large-scale biological warfare program and special nuclear materials were also perceived as a threat. Israel's policy intended to prevent these weapons and technologies from falling into the hands of Israel's enemies, especially Iran.

A third concern regarding Central Asia was that in the absence of Soviet control, Islamist extremism—particularly Iranian-backed fundamentalism—would sweep through the region. Such a development would create an unfriendly atmosphere and severely complicate Israel's ability to engage the new republics for the purposes of building relationships. It would probably also threaten the large Jewish communities in the region. Through building successful relationships via diplomacy, trade and investment, and security cooperation, Israel attempted to prevent the emergence of conditions that would be hospitable for the spread of militant political Islam.

At the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was still considered to be an illegal terrorist organization, and the Oslo Accords (1993) were still two years away. Israel was afraid that the 'Muslim' Central Asian republics would support the Arab negotiating position and side with the rejectionist front of 'hard-line' states, so Israel acted to ensure that Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan did not align against Israel on the issue of Palestine. The memory of Soviet support for belligerent Arab regimes was still fresh, and it was feared that the

new republics would also develop into independent belligerent regimes. The region's large mineral wealth could easily support the emergence of new petro-powers that might subsidize frontline Arab intransigence. It was essential that Israel keep the new republics from aligning completely with their neighbors' rejectionist stance and therefore Israel attempted to secure Uzbek and Kazakh neutrality on the issue of Palestine.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

This thesis examines Israel's relationship with the Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan during the first ten years of their independence, from 1991 to 2001. The focus is solely on Israel's relationship with the republics and not vice versa. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan's relationships with Israel during this period would require a different focus, approach, and analysis.

The time period covered in this thesis is framed by two major events: the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. The thesis begins with the creation of the successor republics in Central Asia that emerged from the chaos of the Soviet collapse and focuses on their formative years. The beginning of a dramatic new period in the international politics of Central Asia is marked by the attacks in America on 11 September 2001. The launch of the US-led global war on terror, the presence of American and coalition military forces in Central Asia, and the overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (December 2001) sparked new and renewed interest in the region from such great powers as the United States, Russia, and China. Furthermore, it signaled the beginnings of independent and assertive foreign policy by both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Israel's relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are the focus of this thesis for several reasons. First, Israel's relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were the most serious and well-developed of its relationships with the five Central Asian republics, and as such they are the most illustrative examples of Israeli strategic policy in the region. Israel developed the closest ties with Tashkent and Almaty because Israeli policy makers focused their energies and efforts on building relationships with what were considered the two most important republics. Uzbekistan was the most geopolitically strategic and populous state in the region. It had a history of religious activism and was home to the largest Jewish community in Central Asia. Kazakhstan, the region's largest state geographically, boasted the most promising economy in Central Asia. That it gained independence as a de facto nuclear power added significantly to its importance.

The second reason for this close examination of Israel's relationship with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan is that they were the locus of Israel's diplomatic presence in Central Asia. As a small nation, Israel cannot establish embassies in every country with which it has diplomatic relations. Israel's embassy in Tashkent is also accredited in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and the embassy in Almaty also represents Israeli interests in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Although outside the period of this study, as of 2006 an Israeli ambassador to Turkmenistan had been appointed, but he is resident at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem.¹

Because of Israel's emphasis in its foreign policy on developing strong relationships with these two republics, there is a significant amount of information and data available from a variety of sources. Although there is considerably less material available regarding Israel's relationships with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and

¹ Ofer Moreno (Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the State of Israel to the Republic of Uzbekistan), interview with the author, 13 March 2006, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Turkmenistan, were they to be included in this study it was feared that the present work would become unwieldy. After chapters two and three, which examine the core concepts of Israeli national security policy and their application in Central Asia, the analysis is focused on the case studies of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In order to facilitate the analysis of Israeli-Uzbek and Israeli-Kazakh relations in chapters four through six, the relationships have been separated into three periods corresponding to the contours of the relationships. There are striking similarities in the pace, intensity, and level of Israeli interactions with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan over the course of the ten-year period examined in this thesis. In both republics, the relationship rapidly grew very close, then experienced a quiet interlude for several years, and then increased in pace and intensity.

Israel engaged Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan immediately after they became independent. This first phase of the relationships witnessed the creation of diplomatic relations, the swift establishment of economic and commercial ties, and security cooperation. In Uzbekistan, phase I took place from 1991–1994, whereas in Kazakhstan it lasted from 1991–1995. This was then followed by a period that was characterized by a lack of engagement. In this second phase, there were few high-level visits between the nations and rarely were any bilateral agreements signed. In the case of both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, trade and investment continued but no security cooperation is known to have taken place. It is noteworthy that in neither case did the relationship fundamentally suffer; the lull in the relationship did not lead to deterioration. Phase II lasted from 1995–1997 in Uzbekistan and from 1996–1998 in Kazakhstan. The third phase was a period of re-engagement during which the

relationships with Tashkent and Almaty were re-invigorated. More interaction and official visits took place during this last phase than in any other under examination in this study. The third phase occurred in Uzbekistan during the years 1998–2001 and in Kazakhstan during the years 1999–2001.

LAYOUT

This introduction is followed by six chapters which address Israeli national security policy, Israeli policy towards Central Asia, Israel's relationship with Uzbekistan, and Israel's relationship with Kazakhstan. Chapter two provides an introduction to the core concepts of Israeli national security policy and is intended to lay the foundation for the discussions and analysis in later chapters. It begins with a brief look at Israel's traditional foreign policy concerns. This is followed by sections dealing with the creation of national policies in Israel and an examination of the four components that have affected the creation and implementation of Israeli national security policies. The chapter then concludes with an assessment of six tenets of Israeli national security policy.

Chapter three details Israeli policy towards Central Asia. It discusses Israel's strategic policy objectives, its perceptions, and misunderstandings of the region, and then evaluates the concerns, threats, and opportunities presented by the emergence of an independent Central Asia. This information will provide a framework for the discussions and analyses in the case studies on Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The issue of how Israel administers foreign development assistance is also explored.

Israel's relationship with Uzbekistan is the focus of chapter four. Israeli-Uzbek relations are examined in the areas of diplomatic and political relations, development assistance, commercial relations, and security cooperation. In the case

of Uzbekistan, Israeli development assistance was used to further diplomatic aims; therefore, it is addressed in conjunction with the sections dealing with diplomatic and political relations. These areas are described in each of the three phases in order to track their development over the course of the relationship. This is complemented with sections on the role of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Israeli-Uzbek relations and an analysis of Uzbekistan's voting patterns in the UN General Assembly on resolutions related to the Middle East and considered hostile to Israel.

The discussion of Israel's relationship with Kazakhstan is spread over two chapters. The first phase of Israel's relationship with Kazakhstan (1991–1995) is addressed in chapter five. This chapter deals with the events leading to the formation of Israeli-Kazakh ties and the first several years of the relationship. Chapter six continues the discussion and analysis of the relationship through phases II and III. An examination of the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict on Israeli-Kazakh ties and a section that analyzes of Kazakhstan's UN General Assembly voting history on relevant resolutions conclude the chapter.

In the final chapter, the conclusions are discussed and several issues for the further study of this topic are noted. Some larger questions are explored briefly: What does Israel's relationship with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan tell us about Israel's interactions with other non-Arab Muslim states? Can this inform our understanding of Israel's other relationships? Can the methods with which Israel engaged Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan be applied elsewhere? As this thesis will demonstrate, Israel's relationship with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in the first ten years of independence was truly unique and without parallel.

USE OF DATA

In chapters four through six, two sets of data are used in measuring the development of Israel's relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The first data set used in chapters four through six is the voting position of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan on United Nations General Assembly resolutions related to the Middle East and considered hostile to the State of Israel that were passed during the timeframe covered in this thesis. These data are analyzed in chapters four (Uzbekistan) and six (Kazakhstan) to help demonstrate the political development of the Israeli-Uzbek and Israeli-Kazakh relationships. The data are drawn from two sources: the resolutions were adapted from the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, and the voting positions were taken from the official United Nations Bibliographic Information System.

These data have been tabulated in appendix one of this thesis, which lists the resolution number, date of the vote, title of the resolution, vote tally, and what vote was cast by the delegations from Israel, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. For reference, the votes cast by the delegations from the United States and Iran are included in the chart. This is intended to give the reader a point of comparison, and they are referenced only briefly in the text; anymore would require a separate treatment. In the UN General Assembly, a delegation may cast one of several types of votes on a resolution: in favor, against, or abstain. It is also possible that they cast no vote. When this is the case, the delegation in question either chose not to vote or was not present for the vote. It is not possible to know with certainty whether a delegation was present for voting on the resolution when they cast no vote, though in some instances circumstantial evidence suggests that the delegation deliberately chose not to vote. The strongest evidence for their deliberate choice not to vote occurs when

their votes were recorded on resolutions which came up either just before or after the resolution in question. At the least, this suggests that the delegation in question was present in the building, although this cannot be known with certainty.

The second set is trade data. Israel's total exports to and imports from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are used to help indicate the level of trade that existed during each year under examination. These figures are drawn from two publications of Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics: the yearly *Statistical Abstract of Israel* and *Foreign Trade Statistics Monthly*. A breakdown of Israel's total trade per month from May 1992 through December 2001 for each of the case studies is provided in appendix two of this thesis.

There are several points which should be noted regarding these data. Before May 1992, Israeli exports to and imports from the Newly Independent States (NIS) were aggregated by the Central Bureau of Statistics and recorded under the single entry of "Former Soviet Union." From May 1992 onward, separate figures were recorded for trade with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Second, the Central Bureau of Statistics recorded data in the calendar year in which the goods were released by Israeli customs and then passed into the domestic Israeli market.² The final point to note about these data is that the trade figures used in this thesis refer to direct, bilateral trade.

NOTES ON SOURCES: ISRAELI NATIONAL SECURITY DOCTRINE

Examining Israeli national security doctrine and its foreign policy on the Central Asian republics is a complicated undertaking for two main reasons. The first

² This author has found that this fact did not significantly affect the analysis or conclusions of this thesis.

reason is the lack of open source material that documents Israel's national security policy.³ While the absence of public and official documents detailing the national security policy and strategic objectives of the Israeli government and military certainly complicates any analysis, it does not make it impossible. There are works by a variety of authors that illuminate Israel's strategic thinking and national security doctrines.⁴ These studies have been written by Israelis as well as non-Israelis and generally fall into two broad categories: those written by individuals who have previously been involved in the formulation of national security policies, and analytical works authored by academics and policy observers.

WORKS WRITTEN BY FORMER PRACTITIONERS

An important collection of works dealing with Israeli national security has been written by retired Israeli military commanders and governmental leaders who participated in the formulation and implementation of the state's national security

³ Gal Luft, who has examined Israel's evolving and maturing security policies, has noted the absence of such primary source material, writing that there "is no definitive document in the public domain stating Israel's national security doctrine." (*All Quiet on the Eastern Front? Israel's National Security Doctrine After the Fall of Saddam* [Washington, DC, March 2004], p. 2, n. 3.)

⁴ Of the many works available, some of the more useful documents include: Alon Ben-David, "Israel's Low-Intensity Conflict Doctrine," *Jane's Defence Weekly* (September 2004), pp. 24-28; Yoav Ben-Horin and Barry Posen, *Israel's Strategic Doctrine* (Santa Monica, 1981); Ed Blanche, "Israel Addresses the Threats of the New Millennium," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, February and March 1999 (parts one and two); Eliot A. Cohen, Michael J. Eisenstadt, and Andrew J. Bacevich, *Knives, Tanks, and Missiles: Israel's Security Revolution* (Washington, DC, 1998); Michael Handel, "The Evolution of Israeli Strategy: The Psychology of Insecurity and the Quest for Absolute Security," in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, ed. Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein (New York, 1994), pp. 534-578; Dan Horowitz, "The Concept of National Security and the Prospect for Peace in the Middle East," in *Dynamics of a Conflict: Reexamination of the Arab Israeli Conflict*, ed. Gabriel Scheffer (Atlantic Highlands, 1975); Efraim Inbar, "Contours of Israel's New Strategic Thinking," *Political Science Quarterly* (Spring 1996): pp. 41-64; Efraim Inbar, "Israel's Strategic Environment in the 1990s," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no. 1 (March 2002): pp. 21-38; Luft, *All Quiet on the Eastern Front*; Bard E. O'Neill, "The Defense Policy of Israel," in *The Defense Policies of Nations*, ed. Douglas J. Murray and Paul R. Viotti (Baltimore, 1994), pp. 371-402; David Rodman, "Israel's National Security Doctrine: An Introductory Overview," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5, no. 3 (September 2001): pp. 1-17; Alvin Rubinstein, "Israelis Ponder Their Long-Term Security," *Orbis* 45, no. 2 (Spring 2001): pp. 259-280; Israel Tal, *National Security: The Israeli Experience* (Westport, CT, 2000); Avner Yaniv, *Deterrence Without the Bomb: The Politics of Israeli Strategy* (Lexington, MA, 1987); and Avner Yaniv ed., *National Security and Democracy in Israel* (Boulder, Colorado, 1993).

policies. Examples of these authors include Benjamin Netanyahu, Ephraim Sneh, and Israel Tal, formerly the Prime Minister, Deputy Minister of Defense, and Assistant Minister of Defense respectively. Their works, written after they left their positions in the Israeli government, are of great use to the observer of Israeli national security policy because the authors are often able to convey the perspectives they had as participants but which can be contextualized now that they have gotten some distance on the events. Because they are written several years after the events, the reflections of the authors often take a more theoretical and abstract approach, providing the reader with a more nuanced understanding of these complex issues. In this regard, General Tal's *National Security: The Israeli Experience* is especially useful.

ACADEMIC AND POLICY SOURCES

The material written by former practitioners is augmented by assessments written by academics and policy observers, as well as by military and security analysts. There is a prolific body of work on the subject of Israeli strategy and national security doctrines by authors such as Efraim Inbar, Avner Yaniv, Amikam Nachmani, Aharon Klieman, Dan Horowitz, Bard O'Neill, and Michael Handel. The work of these authors, and others like them, is of particular use for several reasons. First, because these authors have not been personally involved in the formulation or implementation of state policies, their understandings and conclusions may not be as colored or influenced by personal and professional vestiture in the outcomes of the foreign and national security policy decision-making process as the practitioners' might be. However, many of these authors have participated in the general national security debate within Israel. Second, some of these works have been written by authors whose thinking—for one reason or another—often closely reflects the

thinking of those in the Israeli government who were responsible for the formulation and implementation of foreign and national security policies. As a result, these works offer another insight into understanding the thinking of Israeli national security planners but from a slightly different viewpoint. Finally, because they are primarily academic authors, they attempt to provide us with an empirical analysis based upon observation of the formulation of national security policy.

OBJECTIVITY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

It is important to note that authors within Israel who write on issues related to national security are often required to submit the material to government censors in order to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of information that could prove detrimental to Israeli national security. This requirement is most often enforced with media organizations and not as much with academic and policy analyses. Of course, some authors may in fact 'self-censor' their work. After a very close and thorough reading of the materials used in this thesis, this author has found no discrepancies in the critical analyses of the issues relating to Israeli national security that would question the legitimacy of their arguments. In fact, those works written by Israeli authors in Israel are at times more critical and discerning than those written from abroad—which demonstrates both the intensity and rigor of the debate that surrounds issues of national security and the extreme importance such issues are given within policy circles in Israel.

NOTES ON SOURCES: ISRAELI POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA

While there are virtually no public and official documents that detail Israel's national security policy, there are even fewer documents that detail Israeli foreign

policy regarding the Central Asian republics. However, information on Israel's national security policy can be found in the large body of works written by former practitioners, insiders, and analysts. This is not the case for Israeli foreign policy in the Central Asian republics: to date, only a handful of authors have written about Israel and the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. These include Robert Freedman, Bülent Aras, and Jacob Abadi. Other authors, including Philip Robins, Carol Saivetz, and Raphael Israeli,⁵ have touched on the role Israel has played, usually by examining the relationship between the Middle East and Central Asia within larger studies.

In the first years after the fall of the Soviet Union, Freedman wrote "Israel and Central Asia: A Preliminary Analysis."⁶ In this short article, Freedman provides a cogent assessment of Israel's relationship with Central Asia and highlights some initial trends. Although there are many strengths in this piece, it was based on only the first year of independence and many factors have since had an impact on Israel's relationship with the Central Asian republics. Several of these factors had yet to be identified when Freedman published his article.

Bülent Aras has written two short works on the subject of Israeli-Central Asian relations. The first was a 1998 article in *Middle East Policy* entitled "Post-Cold War Realities: Israel's Strategy in Azerbaijan and Central Asia" in which he provides a good introduction to the subject.⁷ The second piece, appearing as a chapter entitled "Israel's Strategy in Azerbaijan and Central Asia" in his 2002 book *The New*

⁵ Philip Robins, "The Middle East and Central Asia," in *The New Central Asia and its Neighbours*, ed. Peter Ferdinand (London, 1994). Carol R. Saivetz, "Central Asia: Emerging Relations with the Arab States and Israel," in *Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects*, ed. Hafeez Malik (London, 1994). Raphael Israeli, "Return to the source: the republics of Central Asia and the Middle East," *Central Asia Survey* 13, no. 1 (1994): pp. 19-31.

⁶ Robert O. Freedman, "Israel and Central Asia: A Preliminary Analysis," *Central Asia Monitor*, no. 2 (1993): pp. 16-20

⁷ Bülent Aras, "Post-Cold War Realities: Israel's Strategy in Azerbaijan and Central Asia," *Middle East Policy* 5, no. 4 (January 1998): pp. 68-81.

Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position, is for the most part a repetition of his early work on the subject with some minor updates.⁸ Aras' work highlights several issues that would play important roles in Israeli strategy policy towards the region; however, he does not go very deeply into an explanation of their origins.

The last author who has written specifically on the subject is Jacob Abadi. The chapter "Israel and the Great Game in Asia," from his 2004 book *Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in Asia: Garrison State Diplomacy*,⁹ is largely based on an earlier article Abadi published in the *Journal of Third World Studies*.¹⁰ Abadi provides good insights into Israel's relationships with the Central Asian republics. Whereas Freedman and Aras were writing about events as they happened, Abadi's analysis was written several years later; the passage of time has been a benefit in his discussion of the issues surrounding the relationships between Israel and the republics. The result is a good overview of how Israeli policy towards the Central Asian republics was a component of its larger strategy in Asia.

The works by these three authors comprise the bulk of the major academic writing on this subject prior to the completion of this thesis. To supplement this small body of literature, this author obtained primary source documents while conducting field research in the Central Asian republics. These documents, plus interviews conducted by the author throughout Central Asia and in Israel, the United Kingdom, and the United States, offered critical insights into Israel's relationship with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The interviews collected data that were critical to the completion of this thesis. Many interviewees requested not to be identified because of their position, employer, or because they were not authorized to comment for

⁸ Bülent Aras, *The New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position* (London, 2002).

⁹ Jacob Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in Asia: Garrison State Diplomacy* (London, 2004).

¹⁰ Jacob Abadi, "Israel's Quest for Normalization with Azerbaijan and the Muslim States of Central Asia," *Journal of Third World Studies* 19, no. 2 (fall 2002): pp. 63-88.

attribution; I have honored those requests and have tried not to rely very heavily on such sources. Other analytical articles and policy assessments that appeared in a number of less frequently consulted publications and smaller circulation sources were also utilized. While this has posed challenges, it has not compromised the quality of the research or the analysis and conclusions presented in this study.

A large number of other sources were consulted, including foreign media translations

Due to the nature of the researching recent political history, this thesis has made significant use of contemporaneous media and analytical reporting. The sources for this research included period news and media reports, personal interviews with political actors, analysts, and observers, and primary source documents. Media reports and official statements serve an important function as this is frequently the means with which governments communicate their positions. Such communications and statements convey the direct messages and intentions that official players wish to be known, and these positions often form the bases of policy formulation. This tells us what the players in question want to convey to their multiple audiences. It is important to note that this differs from researching what actually took place during official meeting and closed-door exchanges. Such research will become available in the future when the actors involved either publish their memoirs or when archives receive their personal papers and files. At the time that this thesis was being researched, neither of those events had yet to come to pass, with only a few notable exceptions as highlighted in subsequent chapters.

The primary language employed in the research of this thesis was English. To accommodate the variety of languages used in the regions examined in this work, a number of methods were used. These included official foreign media translations

provided by the *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* (FBIS), the *British Broadcasting Corporation Summary of World Broadcasts* (BBC SWB), *BBC International Reports*, *BBC Monitoring*, and the *Open Source Center* (OSC), and commercial operators and publications such as the *NIS Nuclear Trafficking Database* (NIS NTD), *East View Information Services*, and *Mideast Mirror*. These services offered essential translations of contemporaneous print reports and radio and television broadcasts from Hebrew, Russian, Uzbek, Kazakh, and Arabic sources. Official primary source documents written in several languages were translated into English. Some documents were provided directly to the author, while still more were obtained by others on my behalf. When this occurred, it was done because many documents I would have otherwise had no access to, and therefore asked others for their assistance in obtaining specific materials. A number of interviews were conducted with individuals who preferred to speak only in Russian (and on several occasions other languages) in order to not misspeak, and on such occasions I was accompanied by a skilled translator.

CHAPTER TWO: ISRAELI NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY:

CORE CONCEPTS

Israeli national security policy is the culmination of over 50 years of Israeli interaction with its regional neighbors and the international community as well as an even deeper Jewish history predating the creation of the modern Jewish state. The state's national security perceptions and its corresponding policies "have been determined primarily by the threats that its leaders have perceived from the international environment. The content of these threat perceptions, in turn, has been a product of historic, geographic, and demographic factors."¹¹

This chapter seeks to establish a framework for understanding Israeli national security policy. This will be accomplished through a three-step process. In order to understand what is meant by national security in Israel, it is first essential to become familiar with some of the primary foreign policy concerns which occupy Israeli decision makers. This chapter will begin with a brief examination of three of Israel's primary foreign policy concerns: security among its neighbors; international acceptance and recognition; and regional integration.

This very brief foreign policy overview will be followed by a concept arguably unique to the State of Israel, the notion of national security as national survival. This concept, an outgrowth of the collective experiences of Zionism, the

¹¹ Bard E. O'Neill, "The Defense Policy of Israel," in *The Defense Policies of Nations*, ed. Douglas J. Murray and Paul R. Viotti (Baltimore, 1994), p. 371.

Holocaust, the Diaspora, and the founding of the state, is essential to understanding the origins and strategic logic behind Israeli national security policy.

This chapter will conclude with an introduction to the tenets of Israeli national security policy. For the purposes of this study, I have identified six interrelated and complementary national security components, which, when taken together, will illuminate the discussions of Israel's relationships with the republics of Central Asia in subsequent chapters. The six national security tenets I have identified are as follows: (1) situational permanency; (2) deterrence and power projection; (3) self-reliance; (4) great power associations; (5) emphasis on intelligence; and (6) strategic initiative.

It is the hope of this author that this chapter will lay the theoretical groundwork that will enable a clear and thorough analysis of Israel's strategic interaction with the Muslim former Soviet republics of Central Asia.

* * * * *

Historically Israel is a country that has faced numerous ongoing serious and severe threats to its national security. Because Israel was born in war and has existed in a state of continual preparation for conflict ever since, Israeli leaders have always known that the state's very survival is at stake. One observer has asserted when writing on Israel's national security doctrine that "no state in the post-Second World War era has been more concerned with its national security than Israel—and it is not hard to fathom why."¹² Israel is a nation preoccupied with national security and defense, and Martin Sicker states in the opening sentence of his book *Israel's Quest*

¹² David Rodman, "Israel's National Security Doctrine: An Introductory Overview," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5, no. 3 (September 2001): p. 71.

for Security, “the dominant and most characteristic motif of Israeli political life is the perennial quest for security, in the most fundamental sense of the term.”¹³ It has weathered at least half a dozen major conventional wars, and to date has never lost a conflict with any of its adversaries.¹⁴ It has been forced to deal with sustained counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency campaigns, often times combating militants supported by its hostile neighbors.

Many of the security dilemmas threatening Israeli security have historically come from the hostility and animosity of its Arab—primarily Muslim—neighbors, most of whom continue to refuse to recognize Israel’s very right to exist. Over the years, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority have recognized Israel’s right to exist and made separate peace deals with Israel; however, this has not resulted in the full peace and normalization leading to regional integration that has been the objective of the Israeli leadership. Furthermore, the other regional states’ refusal to recognize Israel has been exacerbated throughout the Arab and Muslim world by Israel’s occupation of Arab and Palestinian land. The 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon (which ended in May 2000) and the continued 38-year occupation of Palestinian territory¹⁵ have fueled terrorist and guerrilla actions. It is from within this threat environment that Israeli decision makers have crafted a policy with which to defend the national security of the Jewish state.

¹³ Martin Sicker, *Israel’s Quest for Security* (London, 1989), p. 1.

¹⁴ The Israeli evacuation of southern Lebanon in May of 2000 led some Arab and Iranian observers to believe that the Israelis had been forced to leave their self-described security zone in defeat. The “impression in the Arab world was of a Hezbollah—and, through it, an Iranian—victory”; however, this was despite the fact that “the IDF held the advantage in the field during the actual fighting.” See Ephraim Sneh, *Navigating Perilous Waters* (London, 2005), p. 62.

¹⁵ As of this writing, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory is limited to portions of the West Bank; the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon unilaterally evacuated all military and Jewish settlements in Gaza in the autumn of 2005.

TRADITIONAL FOREIGN POLICY CONCERNS

Aharon Klieman notes in *Israel & the World After 40 Years*, his study of the status of Israel's relations with the international community, that no nation possesses only one single national interest. Israel is clearly no exception to this observation; however, according to Klieman, Israel is noteworthy in that "Israel's definition of its national interest is distinctive on at least two counts." The first of these distinctions is that, in his assessment, "Israeli foreign relations are dictated by no less than seven vital 'issue areas' or clusters of primary objectives. In existence since the 1948 declaration of the state, these core diplomatic aims are legitimacy, peace, security, developing commerce, constructive engagement in international projects, and finally, links with world Jewry." The last of Klieman's primary objectives also doubles as his second distinction of Israeli foreign policy concerns. As the world's first and only Jewish state, Israel has an unbreakable connection to the Jewish Diaspora and the legacy of Jewish history. The importance of this link will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter.¹⁶

Klieman's decision to position legitimacy before either peace or security is not a reflection of the relative weight legitimacy holds over that of either peace or security. Rather, it is merely recognition that international legitimacy, a fundamental attribute historically denied to Israel since the state's creation in 1948, is still absent. International recognition has typically been a formality for other nations since the end of the Second World War; however, in the case of Israel it has served as a barometer of world opinion. Nations have often withdrawn their recognition in response to developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The most notable examples of this were the mass loss of recognition among Soviet-bloc nations—except Romania—following the

¹⁶ Aharon Klieman, *Israel & the World After 40 Years* (London, 1990), p. 5.

1967 war and the widespread suspension of relations by sub-Saharan African nations in the aftermath of the 1973 war.¹⁷

The belief that security could lead to regional integration and acceptance has long been the driving foreign policy goal of Israeli leaders. This was interpreted to be the most assured course of action to achieve lasting peace and stability. In 1975 Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin encapsulated Israel's desire quite succinctly when he stated

"Israel's position is [that] we want peace, a real one. We want boundaries of peace that will make Israel capable of defending itself by itself. We do not want a peace agreement that ends up as peace on a piece of paper. We want peace based on the realities of relations between the peoples of all the countries involved in the area."¹⁸

FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Israel of course possesses many foreign policy objectives, and many eventually return to national security. Such *realpolitik* can be found in nearly every national system, and Israel is far from unique in this matter. However, what differentiates Israel from other nations' foreign policy is the primacy of national security within the perceptive framework through which all other decisions are made in Israeli foreign policy. In seeking to explain the reasons for this primacy, one author stated the following:

One might say that the concern over physical security is a national obsession in Israel and from an Israeli perspective, with good reason. Israel came into existence less than three years after the end of World

¹⁷ Klieman, *Israel & the World*, p. 10. Russia first cut diplomatic relations with Israel in "February 1953—following a bomb blast in the compound of its Tel Aviv embassy," see Michael Brecher, *Israel, the Korean War and China: Images, Decisions and Consequences* (Jerusalem, 1974), p. 26.

¹⁸ Bernard Reich, "Israeli National Security Policy: Issues and Actors," in *Israeli National Security Policy: Political Actors and Perspectives*, ed. Bernard Reich and Gershon R. Kieval (London, 1988), p. 8, quoting Yitzhak Rabin, interview, *US News & World Report*, 23 June 1975, p. 30.

War II and its accompanying Holocaust that slaughtered almost the entirety of European Jewry, some six million men, women, and children. Shortly after the Jewish state was established, in addition to the survivors of the Holocaust who came to Israel, there was an influx of more than a million Jews from the Islamic world, primarily the Arab countries, where they had lived in a subjected and insecure status for more than a millennium. Accordingly, it is the rare family in Israel that has not suffered from the horrors of slaughter and persecution within recent memory.¹⁹

For the purposes of this study, the discussion of Israel's foreign policy concerns will be limited to only those *directly* relating to national security; a full and complete analysis of Israel's myriad foreign policy concerns and objectives is much beyond the scope of this present work. Three Israeli foreign policy objectives are discussed below: the goal of security among its neighbors; international acceptance and recognition; and regional integration. These three policies comprise the primary issues Israel's founders perceived as the major objectives to the achievement of Israel's place in the world. According to Tal, "the founders knew that the long process of the Return to Zion would come about in three stages: a war to defend the Zionist enterprise, including its physical and national existence; the establishment of peace; and finally, establishment and integration in the region, while preserving its uniqueness as the state of the Jewish People, with the goal of becoming an exemplary state."²⁰

SECURITY AMONG ITS NEIGHBORS

Of these foreign policy objectives, there is no single greater Israeli concern than acquiring the permanence and security of the state. In the absence of security, according to Israeli leaders, there can be neither legitimacy nor peace. Simply put,

¹⁹ Sicker, *Israel's Quest for Security*, p. 1.

²⁰ Israel Tal, *National Security: The Israeli Experience*, trans. by Martin Kett (London, 2000), p. 41.

“Peace is greatly desired, but security is more important; any peace settlement that would compromise or undermine Israel’s security is unacceptable.”²¹ Security with its Arab neighbors has always come to be understood in Israel as a precondition for acceptance, recognition, and integration into the region.

As a besieged nation, or “garrison state,” one of the central tenets of Israeli national security policy has been deterrence and power projection (see below). When the Arab states cease trying to destroy the state and stop their attempts to reverse the events of 1948, Israeli national security thinking posits that *eventually* those belligerent Arab states will extend to Israel international recognition and regional acceptance. Heller argues that “security policy could serve the political objective of peace only in the sense that entrenched Israeli military superiority could deter Arab adversaries from initiating war and, if deterrence prevailed long enough, compel them eventually to despair of war as an option.”²² He continues by quoting Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin speaking “45 years after the War of Independence, ‘the longer Israel is successful in deterring an Arab leader or coalition from being tempted to initiate a war, the better become the longer-term prospects for peace.’”²³

The State of Israel was created only to be attacked the very next day by the armed forces of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and by a force of Palestinian irregulars. After refusing to accept the United Nations Partition Plan and refusing to recognize the Jewish State, all of its Arab contiguous neighbors plus Iraq launched a preemptive war to expunge the newly created state. After their unsuccessful bid to defeat the nascent state, the Arab states did not make peace with Israel despite their military failure, and what came next was a cessation of open hostilities—as a result,

²¹ Michael Handel, *Israel’s Political-Military Doctrine* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 64.

²² Mark A. Heller, *Continuity and Change in Israeli Security Policy* (London, 2000), p. 12.

²³ Heller, *Continuity and Change*, p. 12, citing Yitzhak Rabin, “Deterrence in an Israeli Security Context,” in *Deterrence in the Middle East: Where Theory and Practice Converge*, JCSS Study 2, ed. Aharon Klieman and Ariel Levite (Tel Aviv, 1993), p. 9.

Israel exists in "a perpetual state of 'dormant war'."²⁴ It would be more than 30 years until the first of the belligerent states, Egypt, sued for peace with Israel. In the case of Egypt, what Israel received in exchange for recognition and acceptance was not the full-relations foreign policy and national security which Israeli leaders had wanted, but rather a very cold peace. This was clearly not what Israeli leaders such as Rabin had in mind.

INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTANCE AND RECOGNITION

The drive to finally secure international recognition has been a continual ambition of Israel and Israeli leaders ever since the creation of the state. In one sense, Israel has repeatedly been denied the almost *de facto* status which every other post-colonial state created after the Second World War was afforded. Moreover, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Israeli leaders have had to deal with the withdrawal of recognition from a variety of nations in response to developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict. As mentioned, Soviet-bloc countries and nations in sub-Saharan Africa have at certain points in time withdrawn their recognition in order to express their displeasure with Israeli policies²⁵—this development was especially difficult for Israeli foreign policy officials. Following the 1967 war, "Israel's diplomatic relationships have declined... especially as a result of the substantial ruptures with the African states at the time of the 1973 war."²⁶

Achieving a lasting peace settlement has been viewed by Israeli national security planners as a prerequisite to acceptance, recognition, and integration. Recognition is a precursor to integration; once Israel was no longer ostracized both in

²⁴ Dan Horowitz, "The Concept of National Security," in *National Security and Democracy in Israel*, ed. Anver Yaniv (London, 1993), p. 11.

²⁵ The renunciation of recognition on the part of African nations was also the result of intensive Arab diplomacy to force other nations to declare their allegiance over the Arab-Israeli conflict.

²⁶ Reich, "Israeli National Security Policy," p. 2.

the international community and within the Middle East, it was believed, regional integration would follow. This position was validated after the signing of the Oslo Accords. The number of countries which extended recognition to Israel rose to an all-time high. Following Oslo, the number of nations officially recognizing Israel and engaging in official relations increased by 29 countries, including Turkmenistan.²⁷ By 25 July 1995, nearly two years after Oslo, over 155 countries had diplomatic relations with Israel, including all the Central Asian states.²⁸

REGIONAL INTEGRATION

In many respects, the permanency to which Israeli leaders aspire is an outgrowth of international recognition *and* security. Regional integration would come from security for the State of Israel and international recognition and acceptance of its legitimacy. As mentioned previously, the peace that Israel desires would be one that would allow for full trade and relations between peoples. It would entail cultural, commercial, and educational exchanges. As Prime Minister Rabin stated over 30 years ago, Israel did not want simply a cessation of hostilities for the primary reason that that alone would not secure permanency for the Jewish state. True and durable security would only come about after full acceptance, recognition, and integration of Israel and the Jewish people within the larger Middle East.

This as yet unattained goal remains the primary objective for a significant number of Israeli leaders within the national security establishment. Throughout Israeli history, a variety of policies have been attempted in order to advance this goal, from engagement with the countries of the periphery to unilateral disengagement. As shall be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, Israel's interaction with the Central

²⁷ Gad Yaacobi, *Breakthrough: Israel in a Changing World* (London, 1996), Appendix G, pp. 215-218.

²⁸ Gad, *Breakthrough*, Appendix G, pp. 215-218.

Asian republics during the time first decade of independence continues this general policy trend in a successful manner.

THE CREATION OF NATIONAL POLICIES

When considering the creation and implementation of national strategies or foreign policies, it is important to note that such initiatives do not precede international crises or geopolitical developments. This truism is even more relevant when the development in question—such as the collapse of Soviet centralized control and the emergence of an independent Central Asia—is unforeseen, as shall be detailed in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

Nations create policies as a reaction to developments, which is considerably different from contingency planning. In the Israeli case, such an example of contingency planning can be seen in the failure of the 2000 Camp David negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. Even before the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifadah in September 2000, Israeli national security planners, the IDF General Staff, and military intelligence (Aman) prepared for a “renewed round of violence”²⁹ in the Palestinian territories. At the time “IDF Chief of Staff Lt General Shaul Mofaz warned... that the army would not hesitate to use force”³⁰ to defend against Palestinian threats to Jewish settlements. As a result, the IDF deployed four battalion-sized “anti-guerrilla/anti-terrorist units to endangered locations.”³¹ In this case, the military, as the ultimate guarantor of Israeli national security and national survival, was able to read events as they were occurring and take immediate action to defend the state.

²⁹ David Eshel, “Looking into the Future... What are Israel’s Options?” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 16 August 2000, <http://www.janes.com>.

³⁰ Eshel, “Looking into the Future,” <http://www.janes.com>.

³¹ Eshel, “Looking into the Future,” <http://www.janes.com>.

NATIONAL SECURITY AS NATIONAL SURVIVAL

In Israel "the matter of security is perceived as a fundamental requirement of Israel's very existence, and it has been the main national consideration ever since the War of Independence."³² Israeli policy makers have tended to view issues relating to national security *as* questions of national survival and thus as a zero-sum game in which the State of Israel either wins, or it loses. As losing in this sense means the destruction of the State, Israel must never lose: "The clear knowledge that Israel would not get a 'second chance,' that if it is defeated once it will not rise again, has added force, as if of a divine injunction, to the perceived obligation of Israeli society to devote itself to the range of security-related issues."³³ The formation of its relationship with Central Asia was no different. Current thinking at the collapse of the Soviet Union held that developing positive relations with the new republics was paramount to the survival of the state. Then Army Chief of Staff General Ehud Barak stated that the "new Muslim republics in Asia don't seem... something that will add to our health, at least in the long term."³⁴

General Israel Tal, former Assistant Minister of Defense and accomplished armored division commander, asserts in his book *National Security: The Israeli Experience* that in Israel "the concept of security deals with existence."³⁵ He wrote, "Israel's security doctrine is its basic and permanent plan for preparedness, deployment, and war in the defense of the national existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people."³⁶ In his July 1973 groundbreaking study of the subject, *Israel's Political-Military Doctrine*, Harvard's Michael Handel writes that

³² Tal, *National Security*, p. 40.

³³ Tal, *National Security*, p. 40.

³⁴ Daniel Pipes, "The Event of Our Era: Former Soviet Muslim Republics Change the Middle East," in *Central Asia and the World: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan*, ed. Michael Mandelbaum (New York, 1994), p. 48.

³⁵ Tal, *National Security*, p. 44.

³⁶ Tal, *National Security*, p. 42.

security of the state is the primary and overarching concern in Israeli political military doctrine: "The basic assumption underlying the Israeli political military doctrine is the understanding that the *central aim of Arab countries is to destroy the State of Israel whenever they feel able to do so*, while doing everything to harass and disturb its peaceful life."³⁷ While this understanding reflects the time in which it was written, but it is not entirely inappropriate today, it very aptly states the perception of Israeli planners.

In 1973, Israel faced hostile Arab neighbors which had fought four wars against the nascent state as well as hosting a variety of militant Palestinian guerrilla and terrorist organizations. As Handel was writing in the summer of 1973, his assertion that the central tenet of Israeli security doctrine that hostile neighbors would strike when they could was validated three months later when Egypt and Syria launched the October War, catching Israel completely by surprise.

What follows below is a discussion of four components which have had an impact on both the creation and implementation of Israeli national security policy. These four factors are the links with Zionism; the impact of the Holocaust; the role of the Diaspora; and the notion of Israel as the Jewish sanctuary. In order to understand how and why the concept of national security is so deeply interrelated with the notion of national survival, it is essential to acknowledge the lasting impression these four factors have had on Israeli decision making.

THE LINKS WITH ZIONISM

It is crucial to note that the conceptual notion of Israeli security is inextricably tied to that of Zionism. Tal links the premise of national security as national survival

³⁷ Handel, *Israel's Political-Military Doctrine*, p. 64 [emphasis in original].

with the ideological underpinnings of Zionism. According to Tal, "The Zionist idea, which engendered the state of the Jews, posited that this state must be a sovereign shelter and fortress for the entire Jewish people, a center of moral and physical strength under obligation to protect them, directly and indirectly, wherever they may be."³⁸ This critical interconnection is crucial for understanding the relationship between Israel and the Central Asian republics, especially those with Jewish Diaspora communities. This facet of the relationship will be explored in the relevant chapters that follow.

We can understand that national security policy in Israel is conceptualized and perceived not just as national survival for the State of Israel, but rather as the survival of the Jewish people. As a result, through this fundamental principle the notion of national security in Israel does not simply mean the safety and resilience of the territory and state institutions of the State of Israel; national security—in the Israeli understanding of the term—is the safety and surety of the Israeli state and the Jewish nation. Bard O'Neill summarized Dan Horovitz aptly when he wrote:

The centrality of security... was an outgrowth of an essentially pessimistic view of the international environment held by Israeli personalities of various ideological and political persuasions. Such pessimism was rooted in the conception that survival involved not just the safeguarding of the state but the physical existence of all the Jews in Israel as well. This conception, in turn, derived from the unhappy historical experiences of the Jews.³⁹

³⁸ Tal, *National Security*, p. 40.

³⁹ O'Neill, "Defense Policy of Israel," p. 374, summarizing Dan Horovitz, "Is Israel a Garrison State?" *Jerusalem Quarterly* (summer 1977): p. 69.

The Impact of the Holocaust

The single greatest of the 'unhappy historical experiences of the Jews' referred to in the passage cited above is Nazi Germany's genocide of Europe's Jews during the Second World War. The systematic murder of over six million Jews has made it impossible to consider the origins of Israeli concepts of national security without discussion of the impact of the Holocaust. The abiding trauma of the Holocaust on Jewish and Israeli collective memory cannot be emphasized enough. This horrific episode in Jewish history has cast an enduring imprint on the security perceptions of all Israelis and Jews alike. As Martin Sicker crucially notes, "[I]t is the rare family in Israel that has not suffered from the horrors of slaughter and persecution within recent memory."⁴⁰ Israeli leaders have not been spared this impact and their understandings of the national security of the Jewish people have been reflected in their decision-making processes since the creation of the state in 1948.⁴¹ When compounded with their responsibility for guiding the Israeli nation through the process of the establishment of a new country as it comes to terms with the trauma of the industrialized genocide while surrounded by hostile neighbors intent on pushing Israel into the sea, led to a further calcification in the threat perceptions of Israel's national security planners. "The fact that the State of Israel has a significance for the future of the Jewish people, beyond that of the citizens of Israel itself, places an extraordinary burden of historical responsibility on Israel's leaders, a responsibility for Jewish security that is rarely understood and appreciated by non-Jews."⁴²

According to Bard O'Neill, "[T]wo aspects of the Holocaust left a lasting impression on those who would be charged with the responsibility for formulating

⁴⁰ Sicker, *Israel's Quest for Security*, p. 1.

⁴¹ O'Neill, "Defense Policy of Israel," p. 378.

⁴² Sicker, *Israel's Quest for Security*, p. 1.

national security policy for Israel.” The first of these aspects O’Neill cites is the “basic question of survival.” The experience of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany’s attempt to exterminate the Jewish people led Israeli leaders to interpret that “security had come to mean the very existence of a people.” No other people in history had been subjected to such systematic and industrialized mass murder such as that which occurred during the Holocaust. In this sense, Jewish and Israeli leaders came to find the security of the Jewish nation was inseparable from the survival of the Jewish people. Within living memory of many of the people who emerged as leaders of Israel and its national security apparatuses, the very existence of the Jewish people had been nearly extinguished.⁴³

This link with the survival of the Jewish people naturally leads O’Neill to his second connection between Israeli national security thinking and the Holocaust, which is the fact that the security and survival of the Jewish people cannot be guaranteed by any outside powers. The Jewish people alone are the only ones who will act every time to defend the state against all outside threats, or as Israel’s first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion famously said, “What matters is not what the Gentiles say, but what the Jews do.”⁴⁴

In practice, this means that Israel cannot and will not depend upon any outside nation to come to its defense. The stakes are too high—the very existence of a people who have historically been persecuted and nearly exterminated—for such a serious matter to be handled by anyone other than by the Jewish people themselves. The Holocaust demonstrated in the starkest terms possible that no other nation would act to stop or prevent the annihilation of the Jewish people. As O’Neill wrote, “[T]he

⁴³ O’Neill, “Defense Policy of Israel,” p. 373.

⁴⁴ Jacob Abadi, *Israel’s Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in Asia: Garrison State Diplomacy* (London, 2004), p. xi.

experience of the Holocaust led to the further conclusion that physical security was too important to be left to others, since, even in moments of extreme peril, sympathetic friends may be indecisive.”⁴⁵ This Israeli perception of how the world would act would be confirmed in the years to come. One example was the failure of friendly states to sell Israel the proper arms it needed to defend itself when the state was first created. The belief that only Israel can and will act as its security guarantor was reinforced when American President Richard Nixon withheld military assistance to Israel during the 1973 war when Israel felt it was most at risk of failing to counter the combined Arab assault.

There exists debate over what exactly transpired during the 1973 war with respect to “whether or not the United States deliberately held up supplies.” However, that debate notwithstanding, there was most definitely a perception in Israel that correlated to “anxious moments when the first few days of fighting drastically reduced... [Israeli arms] inventories.” European refusal to allow the transshipment of munitions and materiel during the 1973 war and Japan’s endorsement of “the Arab demand that the occupied territories be returned” further strengthened the firmly held belief among Israeli national security planners that only Israel would act to defend itself. This notion will be further developed later in this chapter.⁴⁶

THE ROLE OF THE DIASPORA

Prior to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the Jewish people had lived in exile, dispersed throughout the world. This fact deeply affected the underlying concepts of national security in Israel for several reasons. First, it underscored the

⁴⁵ O’Neill, “Defense Policy of Israel,” p. 373.

⁴⁶ O’Neill, “Defense Policy of Israel,” p. 381-382.

urgency with which the Jewish people must act to guarantee their own security. History had demonstrated that no other power would act to protect world Jewry. Second, it reinforced the desire to achieve a lasting settlement and home for the Jewish people. The trauma of exile and the Holocaust calcified the exigency of the situation. This is reflected in the deep responsibility that Israeli leaders have taken to guarantee the security and safety of the state. Third, the Diaspora has had an impact on the State of Israel's national security policies through the enshrinement of self-reliance.

Finally, the experiences of the Diaspora⁴⁷ have solidified the "deep-rooted... feelings of communal solidarity based on the fundamental distinction between Jews and non-Jews, and the abiding distrust of foreigners and outsiders." Heller has argued that "Israeli policy makers were influenced by the habits of thought and action instilled by centuries of Jewish communal life in the Diaspora." In addition, Heller asserts that "Israel's condition of isolation was seen as a continuation of the traditional Jewish condition of isolation and vulnerability in a hostile environment." Some have expressed the opinion that this has led to the strong national security tenets which are detailed below. However, "whatever the objective reality of Israel's condition," it can be argued that the experiences of the Diaspora have had an impact on the Israeli perception of their environment as hostile and unforgiving.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ For more on the role of the Diaspora in bolstering Israeli policy in Central Asia, see Andrey Vasilyevich Fedorchenko, "Kazakhstan-Israel: Ways of Economic Rapprochement," <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001; site discontinued) and Avi Machlis, "Azerbaijan courts Jews, Israel to win favor with U.S.," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 1 February 2000.

⁴⁸ Heller, *Continuity and Change*, p. 13.

The Only Permanent Ally

Ultimately, the Jewish Diaspora is the only permanent ally of the State of Israel.⁴⁹ Israel has been supported unconditionally through continued immigration of Jews from around the world and financial support of Jews from abroad. Following the substantial Soviet arms deal to Egypt in 1955, Israeli national security and military leaders took dramatic steps to adjust the imbalance of arms in the region. O'Neill states that "contributions from Jews outside Israel helped to defray the costs"⁵⁰ of meeting this new challenge. In seeking to reach parity, Israel also depended on German reparations, American loans, and significant international debt. This assessment of the Diaspora as the only permanent ally of the Jewish state in part can be understood as a result of that condition of isolation discussed above and the notion of self-reliance reinforced during exile that no other power would act to defend the Jewish people.

ISRAEL AS THE JEWISH SANCTUARY

The factors discussed previously in this section—the links with Zionism, the impact of the Holocaust, and the role of the Diaspora—have all contributed to the formation of the concept of Israel as a sanctuary for the Jewish people. It is the only place in the world dedicated to ensuring the safety and security of world Jewry. History has proven time and again that no other actor or state will always act in the interests of the Jewish people. It is only Israel, the world's first and only Jewish state, which will always act to safeguard the Jewish people, anywhere in the world.

As a result of these unique factors, the sense of permanence and drive to establish regional integration and lasting peace are paramount. All of these stem from

⁴⁹ Tal, *National Security*, p. 40.

⁵⁰ O'Neill, "Defense Policy of Israel," p. 378.

ensuring the security of the state and the Jewish people. This can only be achieved through eternal vigilance, continued preparedness to fight to defend the state, and an unceasing advancement of national interests.

As components of a national ethos, these factors comprise not only a world-view held by many Israelis, but also double as part of a sense of Israeli nationalism. In expressing his opinion on nationalism, former Deputy Minister of Defense Ephraim Sneh wrote about the importance of

[U]nderstanding of the lessons of Jewish history and of the catastrophes and struggles that led to the founding of the Jewish state. The Jewish people's suffering while scattered over the face of the earth, the terrible culmination of which was the Holocaust, obliges us to be strong in our own land. A deep knowledge of the high price we have paid for establishing and maintaining the state... will make clear... just how irreplaceable this land is to us.⁵¹

Sneh goes on to emphasize the importance of "national tradition"⁵² and belonging, and it very succinctly describes the ineffable tie Israelis feel to their country.

THE PERIPHERY POLICY

Since its creation in 1948, one of Israel's primary goals has been to guarantee its survival through the achievement of legitimacy in the eyes of its detractors. Israel has pursued a variety of strategies in order to accomplish this goal, most notably its famed Periphery Policy⁵³ and the advancement of the Middle East Peace Process. Both of these policies have held that normalizing relations with potential adversaries is essential to survival of the state.

⁵¹ Sneh, *Navigating Perilous Waters*, pp. 111-112.

⁵² Sneh, *Navigating Perilous Waters*, p. 112.

⁵³ For an excellent overview of Israel's Periphery Policy, see chapter three, "The Periphery Policy: 1958-1967," in Sohrab Sobhani, *The Pragmatic Entente: Israeli-Iranian Relations, 1948-1998* (London, 1989).

In its Periphery Policy, Israel sought to create close relations with those non-Arab states at the 'peripheries' of the Middle East "that, as David Ben-Gurion put it, lay beyond the 'Arab fence.'"⁵⁴ Most notably, these states included pre-Revolutionary Iran and secular Turkey. By anchoring itself to these strong states which also viewed the Arab world with some suspicion, Israel attempted to protect itself by aligning with similarly minded nations. As a secret US Central Intelligence Agency report explained, "the Israelis have over the years made efforts to break the Arab ring encircling Israel by involvement with non-Arab Moslem nations in the Near East."⁵⁵ For some Israeli leaders, this relatively short-lived policy provided an important benefit which they saw as being of help in gaining recognition for their state, or further

The underlying rationale for the periphery policy was Israel's understanding that it could not achieve security through a military victory by eliminating millions of Arabs in the Middle East. Israel's response, therefore, to its pressing security concern was to formulate a policy that would drive a wedge among its enemies by forging alliances with non-Arab nations.⁵⁶

That is, the shifting of the focus of the Middle East from being simply Arab, but to also include Persian, Turkish, Berber, *and Israeli*. The founder of the Periphery Policy, Reuven Shiloah, argued that the "Middle East is not an exclusively Arab area; on the contrary, the majority of its inhabitants [at the time] are not Arabs. The Turks, the Persians, and the Jews—without taking into account the Kurds and other non-Arab minorities in the Arab states—are more numerous than the Arabs in the Middle

⁵⁴ Philip Robins, "The Middle East and Central Asia," in *The New Central Asia and Its Neighbours*, ed. Peter Ferdinand (London, 1994), p. 66.

⁵⁵ Sobhani, *Pragmatic Entente*, p. 33.

⁵⁶ Sobhani, *Pragmatic Entente*, p. 34.

East.”⁵⁷ The logic held that if the focus was removed from the Arab-Israeli conflict, more nations would seek to establish relations with Israel.

Recently, the Periphery Policy has focused on containing the perceived threat from Iran.⁵⁸ According to a senior Israeli government official, Israel has sought to build connections with the neighbors of Iran—its main enemy.⁵⁹ Despite these attempts, there is a recognition that even such behavior cannot moderate Iranian behavior;⁶⁰ however, it may contain Iranian actions.

THE TENETS OF ISRAELI NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

Israeli national security policy can be subdivided into six separate yet interdependent components. These interrelated components reflect different aspects of the singularity of Israeli national security policy from doctrinal and strategic concepts to tactical and operational necessities. These components, when taken in sum, can assist in our understanding of the multifaceted and complex issues related to Israeli security. It is hoped that these tenets which I have identified below will serve as a lens through which Israeli interaction with the titular peoples of former Soviet states of Muslim Central Asia can be better understood; this analysis will be detailed in subsequent chapters. The use of these tools is intended to illuminate the rationale as well as the strategic and tactical thinking work behind Israel’s engagement with Central Asia during the ten-year period following the demise of the Soviet Union.

As has been demonstrated above, Israeli national security policy is a product and reflection of many concerns and factors unique to the Israeli case. Israeli and

⁵⁷ Michael Brecher, *Foreign Policy System of Israel*, (New Haven, 1972) p. 174, cited in Sobhani, *Pragmatic Entente*, p. 33.

⁵⁸ Ephraim Sneh, MD (Member of Knesset), in a telephone interview with the author, 4 November 2005, Tel Aviv, Israel.

⁵⁹ Sneh, telephone interview.

⁶⁰ Sneh, telephone interview.

Jewish history and geo-strategic realities have had an impact on Israeli understandings of their security requirements and the corresponding doctrines with regard to both Israel's immediate regional neighbors as well as the larger international community. Israel's geo-strategic limitations, such as its small size, hostile neighbors, topographically indefensible borders, lack of strategic depth, absence of formal alliances, and relatively small population, can be—and often are—addressed through the implementation of these national security tenets. The security tenets which follow are not specific to Israeli concerns in Central Asia; however, they are particularly relevant with respect to the case of the former Soviet Muslim republics. They are indicative of Israel's security and threat perceptions for its region, the Greater Middle East, and the international arena.

For the purposes of this thesis I have identified six national security tenets as follows: (1) situational permanence; (2) deterrence and power projection; (3) self-reliance; (4) great power associations; (5) emphasis on intelligence; and (6) strategic initiative. None of these tenets is granted any more emphasis than any other. They are parts of a whole and are best understood as complementary components which together serve as force multipliers to maximize the national security of Israel.

THE EVOLVING NATURE OF ISRAELI NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

The second factor affecting the analysis of Israeli national security policy is the fact that it is a constantly evolving policy. The national security threats that confront Israel have changed since the creation of the state, and over time, as those threats change, so too have the policies and doctrines that the state employs to meet and overcome those challenges. This corresponding ebb and flow of threat perceptions and the attempts to rise to the challenges posed by those threats are very



aply assessed in Mark Heller's Adelphi Paper *Continuity and Change in Israeli Security Policy*.⁶¹ Some security threats (such as strategic geography and the population disparity) have remained consistent concerns, while others (such as demographic increases and access to scarce resources such as water) have increased in importance. Israel is a small state, and Arab neighbors enjoy a population growth rate that Israel can never hope to match. Even the influx of Soviet and Eastern European Jews that have made Aliyah could never match the explosive growth rates witnessed in Egypt, Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon.

When discussing Israeli national security, it is important to note that the types of conflicts Israel is likely to face in future is changing. The likelihood of large-scale conventional military conflicts has been reduced as Israel has secured peace agreements with its Arab neighbors. As of this writing, since Operation Iraqi Freedom has for the time being removed the threat of an Iraqi military attack, only Syria poses an immediate conventional threat to Israel,⁶² but this threat is unlikely to develop under the current leadership of President Bashar al-Assad.

The military-security threats facing Israel can be broken down into several different yet often overlapping forms. In an article in the *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, a defense analyst observed four primary Israeli national security dilemmas: conventional wars, terrorism and guerrilla warfare, insurrection, and border skirmishes. Threats to the national security of Israel have included at least six major conventional wars, including the 1948 War of Independence; the 1956 Suez Campaign; the 1967 Six Day War; the 1969-1970 War of Attrition; the 1973 October War; and 1982's Operation Peace for Galilee, which saw the IDF invade and occupy

⁶¹ See Heller, *Continuity and Change*. Heller charts the changes in external threats to Israel and Israel's responses to those changes in his study of this phenomenon.

⁶² For more on this development, see Gal Luft, *All Quiet on the Eastern Front? Israel's National Security Doctrine After the Fall of Saddam* (Washington, DC, March 2004).

Lebanese territory. Threats at “low end of the unconventional spectrum,” (such as terrorism) as well as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) are increasingly posing existential threats to Israel’s national security.⁶³

EVOLVING THREAT ORIGINS

The national security policy of Israel has evolved over decades since the founding of the state in 1948. In order to meet “acute challenges to its national security,”⁶⁴ Israel has adapted to shifting threat origins and types. An example of the changing threats facing Israeli national security planners can be seen in the types of external military threats with which they have had to contend.

At the time of independence in 1948 and until the emergence of the proliferation of ballistic missile and WMD technology in the 1980s, Israel faced primarily a conventional military confrontation with its contiguous Arab neighbors.⁶⁵ Advanced delivery systems and the potentially devastating effects of a WMD attack on Israel dramatically altered Israeli threat perceptions: “Israel, because of its small size and highly concentrated population and industry, is especially vulnerable to WMD threats.”⁶⁶ Since the 1980s, the threat no longer comes from quantitatively superior conventional Arab armies but from the increasingly inexpensive proliferation in advanced delivery weapons systems and WMD technologies from other than contiguous Arab neighbors.⁶⁷ Despite the shift in the origin and method of the threat, the danger posed remains the same: an existential threat to the State of Israel. The rise of WMD threats marked a significant change in Israeli national security

⁶³ Rodman, “Israel’s National Security Doctrine,” p.71.

⁶⁴ Rodman, “Israel’s National Security Doctrine,” p.71.

⁶⁵ Although Iraq has participated in several Arab-Israeli wars, it never had a significant impact on the outcome of those wars. A key aspect of Israeli military doctrine has always been to “terminate any military confrontation as quickly and decisively as possible” with the belief “that the longer active combat continued, the more political pressure would build on other Arab countries to join the battle.” See Heller, *Continuity and Change*, p. 13.

⁶⁶ Heller, *Continuity and Change*, p. 31.

⁶⁷ For more on this topic, see Efraim Inbar, “Israel’s Strategic Environment in the 1990s,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no. 1 (March 2002): p. 29 and p. 34.

perceptions and doctrine, one which in fact continues to be debated and is still evolving in Israel. This is just one example of how threats to Israeli national security have changed.⁶⁸

From Strategic Shift to Tactical Implementation

A tangible example of how threat alterations have affected Israeli national security practices can readily be seen in the evolution of counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency tactics used by the Israeli military in confronting new military conditions.⁶⁹ As old threats recede in likelihood and new threats emerge, the IDF has modified its operational procedures.

Israeli tactical combat has changed in order to deal with modern contemporary threats. This can be seen in the ways in which the IDF fights an asymmetrical conflict with Palestinian militants. Because the IDF now sees its land combatant role as fighting in urban and built-up areas, it has modified its tactics. This process began in the late 1990s, and as Brigadier General Aviv Kohavi stated to *Jane's Defence Weekly*, "When the fighting started [during the al-Aqsa Intifadah] we realized there were no relevant doctrine or techniques for fighting low-intensity conflict combat in populated urban areas. With the situation in constant flux, on a daily basis we were required to develop solutions to unique situations." One such example was a technique Kohavi employed to keep his soldiers off the streets during the first Israeli

⁶⁸ For more information, there are numerous sources to consult. Some recommended places to start include: Heller, *Continuity and Change*; Inbar, "Israel's Strategic Environment," pp. 21-38; Rodman, "Israel's National Security Doctrine," pp. 71-86; Sneh, *Navigating Perilous Waters*; and O'Neill, "Defense Policy of Israel," pp. 371-402.

⁶⁹ Alon Ben-David, "Homeland Security: Israel—On the frontier of success," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 22 June 2005, <http://www.janes.com>; Alon Ben-David, "Israel's Low-intensity Conflict Doctrine—Inner conflict," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 1 September 2004, <http://www.janes.com>; Eshel, "Looking into the Future," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 16 August 2000, <http://www.janes.com>; and Ed Blanche, "Israel Addresses the Threats of the New Millennium," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, February and March 1999 (parts one and two), <http://www.janes.com>.

reoccupation of a Palestinian refugee camp. At the Balata refugee camp outside Nablus in February 2002, Kohavi's men "came up with the idea of moving into the camp by carving a passage through the walls" which allowed them "to avoid the streets and alleys and surprise the enemy." This innovation⁷⁰ was quickly adopted in other IDF operations and is now taught in IDF courses as a standard method. Many other techniques, such as those to facilitate surprise arrests and apprehending wanted persons in urban locations, were developed to meet emerging threats and are now taught in IDF courses as a matter of standard doctrinal instruction. These are merely a few tactical operational examples to illustrate how Israeli strategic security perception evolves and adapts to meet the ever-changing strategic threat environment.⁷¹

SITUATIONAL PERMANENCE

The term 'situational permanence' is used to describe the fact that Israel's geo-strategic situation will not fundamentally change. The existence of the Jewish state is a geopolitical reality, and Israel is a permanent fixture in the international community. Moreover, the conditions in which the state must exist—and *it is important to stress that this is from an Israeli perspective*—will not change: Israel will "continue to live in a hostile environment."⁷²

From the perspective of Israeli national security planners, it is prudent policy to maintain the firm stance that regional intransigence to the existence of the Jewish state will not end—Israeli and Jewish histories painfully prove this point. The Israeli government had expected regional acceptance following the armistice accords which ended open hostilities in the War of Independence; however, when that acceptance

⁷⁰ The US military learned this technique from the Israelis, and it was employed in the American siege of Fallujah, Iraq, in 2004.

⁷¹ Ben-David, "Israel's Low-intensity Conflict Doctrine," <http://www.janes.com>.

⁷² Heller, *Continuity and Change*, p. 10.

was not forthcoming, Ben-Gurion moved to put a greater emphasis on Israel's security component. Klieman notes that "this expressed itself in strengthening of the Israel Defense Forces, enforcement of a retaliatory policy aimed at punishing Arab armistice violations, plus a declaratory (*casus belli*) policy of explicit warnings meant to deter Arab aggression."⁷³ This development in Israeli foreign and security policies was a direct result of the ever-increasing realization that Israel's neighbors were unprepared and unwilling to acknowledge the permanence of the State of Israel.

While Israel's regional neighbors refused to recognize the reality of the Jewish State's creation and permanent existence in what they had previously perceived solely as the Arab World, the perception held by Israeli national security planners that the region was a dangerous and hostile neighborhood hardened. As Klieman astutely wrote, "[T]he world beyond Israel's borders is often perceived of, in short, as distinctly inhospitable—a dangerous and challenging place."⁷⁴ In his discussion of the impact of this trend, he added:

Perceiving Arab enmity as enduring and real permits little room for generosity, few illusions, and absolutely no major mistakes on Israel's part. In the long run, faith, trust, and self-assurance have been eroded and replaced by mistrust, by apprehension, and by a certain rigidity that foreigners often find disagreeable.... Thus it is that Israel's military approach to the dilemma of physical security and to regional politics is often diagnosed by outside commentators as a siege mentality, or "Massada complex."⁷⁵

Moreover, regional friends may not always be peaceful neighbors. Despite the peace agreements and normalization of relations between nations, there are no guarantees that this will always be the status quo. "For Israelis cynical about the

⁷³ Klieman, *Israel & the World*, p. 69.

⁷⁴ Klieman, *Israel & the World*, p. 43.

⁷⁵ Klieman, *Israel & the World*, p. 60.

sincerity of Arab commitments to peace, 'war after peace' is a problem inherent in the peace process. For others, concern stems primarily from uncertainty about political stability in the region."⁷⁶ Heller identifies demographic pressures, rapid urbanization, economic stagnation, stalled reforms, challenge of radical Islam or resurgent nationalism, and uncertain political succession as chronic internal problems⁷⁷ that could cause friendly states to reverse their positions vis-à-vis Israel and renounce peace agreements. Those states bordering Israel, such as Egypt, who have revamped and modernized their militaries after establishing relations with Israel, would fundamentally alter Israel's security perceptions if they were to reenter the Arab-Israeli conflict. The strategic calculus would dramatically shift to a precarious situation if hostile regimes were to emerge where currently nonbelligerent governments currently exist. As a result, Israel must always be prepared to defend itself. According to Prime Minister Barak, "The might of the IDF is the true guarantee to the peace agreements, to our partners' abiding by them, and to Israel's security after attaining peace treaties. We live in a difficult region and environment, which do not resemble neither North America, nor Western Europe. In the Middle East there is no pity or esteem towards the weak: He who is unable to defend himself does not get a second chance."⁷⁸

The Rise of the Iranian Threat

For much of Israel's existence, this intransigence has been described as Arab hostility. While not to discount the threat of Arab hostility, it is critical to stress that opposition to Israel has not emanated solely from the Arab world, but also from the

⁷⁶ Heller, *Continuity and Change*, p. 23.

⁷⁷ Heller, *Continuity and Change*, p. 23.

⁷⁸ Inbar, "Israel's Strategic Environment," p. 35, quoting remarks by Ehud Barak made at the National Defense College, *Yediot Aharonot*, 13 August 1999. Quote unchanged, reproduced as in the original.

rest of the international community, in particular the nonaligned and Third World countries, and especially from the wider Muslim world.

Events in recent years have led Israeli national security strategy to place less of a premium upon threats arising from the Arab world—especially since the 2003 invasion of Iraq and removal of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime—and come to view Iran as the single greatest existential threat to Israeli security.⁷⁹ From the Israeli point of view, Iran in particular has emerged since the 1979 Islamic Revolution as one of the primary—if not greatest—enemies of Israeli security. The Israeli perception of an Iranian threat and the fear of Khomeinism will be explored in Chapter 3.

The Reality of Regional Enmity

This perception of regional enmity has been hardened into policy reality over the course of the past half century. Israel has faced threats from its immediate neighbors, the so-called confrontation Arab states,⁸⁰ or frontline states, and from states farther away such as Iran. Bernard Reich wrote

The other Arab states pose less of a direct military threat but are included in the conception of the enemy because they have been allied with the confrontation states in the Arab League and other institutions, have participated in Arab summit decisions against Israel, have joined in the chorus of anti-Israel rhetoric, and have provided some of the wherewithal for, and occasionally sent troops to participate in, the wars, terrorist acts, and other anti-Israel military and paramilitary actions.⁸¹

Israel has fought at least five major wars (excluding the 1968-1970 War of Attrition) with its regional neighbors and is currently engaged in the second Palestinian national uprising. Although the first Intifadah can be classified essentially

⁷⁹ Sneh, telephone interview.

⁸⁰ Reich, "Israeli National Security Policy," p. 2.

⁸¹ Reich, "Israeli National Security Policy," p. 3.

as clashes with a largely unarmed civilian population under military occupation, the second or al-Aqsa Intifadah is markedly different and serves as an example of the regional hostility arrayed against the State of Israel.

The second Palestinian uprising rages as an urban low-intensity conflict between the IDF and Israeli security services, on the one hand, and fairly well armed irregular guerrillas and militant terrorists on the other. Moreover, this latest Intifadah has taken on its own regional hue: Iran and Lebanese elements have sought to provide weapons and ammunition to Palestinian fighters, in addition to rhetorical support.⁸²

The most notable example of Iranian involvement has been the *Karine-A* incident (3 January 2002), in which Israeli naval commandos intercepted in international waters a freighter carrying over 50 tons of Iranian materiel destined for Palestinian guerrillas.⁸³ The Iranian-backed Hezbollah organization has also attempted to infiltrate weapons and fighters into Israel and Gaza, the latter made famous through the capture of the vessel *Santorini* (6 May 2001). Hezbollah has tried to link the al-Aqsa Intifadah to the disputed Shebba Farms territory situated between Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. The involvement of Hezbollah is troublesome because the organization is tacitly and expressly backed by both Iran and Syria, thereby increasing the possibility of a widening conflict.

Furthermore, the proliferation of regional satellite television services has exacerbated the perception of the al-Aqsa Intifadah as a regional conflict. Since the creation of such pan-Arab channels as *al-Jazeera* and *al-Arabiyya*, the entire region

⁸² Robert Berger, "Israel Concerned Over New Hamas-Iran Alliance," *Voice of America*, 22 February 2006, and "Israel intercepts Hizballah shipment to Palestinians," news summary of the Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 24 May 2003.

⁸³ "Israel Intercepts Palestinian Arms Shipment at Sea," news summary of the Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 5 January 2002.

views the conflict on a daily basis.⁸⁴ The continual consumption of this video violence has led to a corresponding increase in the flow of moneys and charitable donations to 'martyrs' families' from donors through the Arab and Muslim world. As a result, the conflict has had an adverse effect on Israel's standing throughout the international community, especially with those Arab states such as Tunisia and Qatar with which Israel had made diplomatic inroads.⁸⁵ Thus, 50 years after the establishment of the State of Israel, even a seemingly local dispute between two parties can be understood from an Israeli perspective as yet another example of regional hostility.

* * * * *

Situational permanence can therefore be understood to be one of the core concepts of Israeli national security policy. It is a twofold concept. The first component is that the State of Israel, as both a national homeland for world Jewry and as the national progression of the Zionist enterprise, is a reality that will not again be displaced. The second is the notion that the circumstances which cause the threats that are perceived by Israeli decision makers will not fundamentally change. The threats which Israel has been forced to confront since it declared independence reaffirm the fact that it lives in a hostile neighborhood, amidst many actors (nations and non-state actors alike) who would gladly welcome the destruction of the Jewish state. Israel's defense posture, therefore, can be understood as one of national defense to safeguard the security and continued existence of the state.

⁸⁴ Christopher Boucek, "Satellites beam uprising across the region," *Middle East Times* (Cairo), 15 October 2000.

⁸⁵ Israelis often refer to such states as 'moderate'; however, such a term does little to accurately portray the true nature of their regimes.

DETERRENCE AND POWER PROJECTION

Deterrence has historically been an essential tool for Israeli policy makers. This policy has essentially entailed two main components. The Israeli policy of deterrence first seeks to deter hostility through the understood consequence of overwhelming Israeli retaliation. Second, this policy attempts to ensure that all would-be belligerent states know that a hefty price will be extracted for any attempt to compromise the national security of the State of Israel. It is the notion that any hostile aggression would be met with an appropriate military response that would both meet and repulse the initial attack *and* seek to inflict punitive damage that will ensure that such a strike would not occur again.

Successful Power Projection

When taken together with the acknowledged ability of Israeli military and security forces to project their power across vast distances, the policy of deterrence is magnified significantly. Examples of Israeli power projection have included instances of both overt and more clandestine military activity. Successful examples of overt military power projection far from Israeli national territory include the hostage rescue at Entebbe, Uganda, in July 1976; the June 1981 air strike on the Iraqi nuclear facility at Osirak; the October 1985 air raid on the headquarters of the PLO in Tunis, Tunisia; and also in Tunis, the April 1988 assassination of PLO military commander Khalil Wazir, better known as Abu Jihad.⁸⁶ The Israelis have struck deep into Africa, across the Mediterranean Sea in the distant Maghreb, and deep into the Arab heartland.

Examples of less overt but not-quite-clandestine power projection include the retaliatory assassinations of the Palestinian Black September terrorists responsible for

⁸⁶ For more information on these events, consult Dilip Hiro, *The Essential Middle East: A Comprehensive Guide* (New York, 2003), s.v. "Mossad," pp. 331-333.

the murders of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games in 1972; the sabotage of nuclear components destined for Iraq in the French port of La Seyne-sur-Mer in April 1979; the clandestine abduction⁸⁷ from Western Europe to Israel of nuclear whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu in September 1986; and the October 1995 assassination of Islamic Jihad leader Fathi Abdul Aziz Shikaki in Malta.⁸⁸

All of the examples cited above—from the instances of overt preemptive power projection to lesser acknowledged instances of assassinations, sabotage, and espionage—have occurred far from Israel's borders, often on other continents. Yet these disparate events are linked as examples of the State of Israel's acting to either project its power across great distances in order to influence the conditions which may have an adverse effect on the state's national security, or in order to respond to a hostile action.

Israel's Nuclear Deterrent

No discussion of deterrence and Israeli national security policy can be complete without reference to Israel's understood nuclear capability. While the subject is beyond the scope of this present study, a very brief mention is warranted to acknowledge its importance.

Israel's ever-changing national security environment has required its national security planners to prepare for the eventuality of the emergence of WMDs and sophisticated delivery systems such as ballistic missiles. A number of Israel's hostile regional neighbors have sought to acquire WMDs, such as chemical warfare agents (CW) and biological warfare agents (BW). Libya, Syria, Sudan, Egypt, Iran, and Iraq have all at one point been suspected of possessing CW and/or BW. Several Arab

⁸⁷ For more on the Vanunu saga, see Peter Hounam, *The Woman from Mossad: The Story of Mordechai Vanunu & the Israeli Nuclear Program* (n.p., 1999).

⁸⁸ Hiro, *Essential Middle East*, s.v. "Mossad," pp. 331-333.

states have even used these weapons in war; Egypt has been accused of using CW during its involvement in Yemen in the early 1960s. More widely known is the fact that Iraq used CW during its eight year war with Iran and again against its own Kurdish population, most notably at Halabja in 1988. Furthermore, regional states such as Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Iran, and Iraq have all at one time sought nuclear weapons. Israel, as mentioned above, took military and covert action to preempt the Iraqi nuclear program. After the past decade, Iran's nuclear ambitions now appear to be the most advanced and are therefore the most worrisome to Israeli national security planners.

As best as can be understood from open source literature, Israel is believed to be in possession of a nuclear deterrent and the capability to deliver such weapons throughout the region. In its policy of nuclear ambiguity, Israel has repeatedly stressed that it will not be the first nation to introduce such weapons to the region.⁸⁹ However, it has also cautioned all other states against assuming that their introduction of nuclear arms would somehow hobble Israel's ability to respond in kind. This ultimate deterrent is intended to give pause to Israel's enemies before they consider launching a WMD attack on the Jewish state. Israel's nuclear deterrent is believed to be composed of land- and sea-based weapons, as well as the capacity to deliver such weapons by tactical aircraft. Crucially, Israel is believed to have a second-strike capability by virtue of its three Dolphin-class submarines acquired from Germany. This seaborne capability ensures that no state can launch a preemptive strike, nuclear or otherwise, and escape from devastating retaliation.

⁸⁹ Handel, *Israel's Political-Military Doctrine*, p. 66.

Limits of Deterrence

Within the concepts of Israel national security policy it is important to recognize that even deterrence has its limits. Simply put, there are some situations in which deterrence does not or cannot work. When it comes to deterring terrorism, Israel has very aptly demonstrated that in the event of terrorist activity originating from a foreign country, that nation will be held responsible. Israel has launched punitive raids into the territory of all its neighbors to make this point. However, attempting to deter religiously inspired suicide bombers has proven far more difficult. Retaliation against surviving family members has failed to work. Expulsions and home demolitions have not made Israelis safer, and thus unilateral separation has gained currency.

Another example of the failure of deterrence occurred during the 1991 Gulf War when Iraqi Scud missiles fell on Israel. American pressure kept Israel from retaliating; however, the threat of Israeli massive retaliation did not dissuade Iraq from initially attacking the Jewish state. It must be acknowledged that the aim of Iraq's attacks were to fracture the coalition aligned against Baghdad, yet even so the understood threat of an Israeli response did not materialize. For decades, Israeli national security policy has fostered the understanding that any attack on Israel would be met with overwhelming and devastating repercussions. As a result, it must be considered that in the eyes of Israel's potential attackers, the perceived likelihood of a massive retaliation has diminished. If this understanding is true, then Israeli national security planners must find another way to impress upon hostile states that there is a very significant price to pay for threatening Israel. In this sense, it could be argued that preemption and prevention of capabilities that threaten Israeli security interests will increase in importance in Israeli national security policy.

SELF-RELIANCE

From the earliest days, Israeli leaders have learned the painful lesson of self-reliance. In essence, self-reliance as a tenet of national security policy means that the Jewish state cannot count on any other nation to work to consistently ensure Israel's safety and security: "An immediate strategic objective, greatly influenced by the Holocaust and the 1948 war, was to become as self-reliant as possible where security was concerned."⁹⁰ When Israel was attacked by all of its Arab neighbors after declaring independence, it was not the international community or any outside actor who acted to protect the nascent state. It was Israel alone who defended its security.

Handel has identified self-reliance as one of the core concepts of Israeli political-military doctrine. He wrote that "Israel has made and will continue to make every effort to reach the maximum level of military self-sufficiency."⁹¹ This development is in part a reaction to historical events such as those outlined previously, and was reinforced by the international community's actions toward Israel in episodes perceived by the Israeli leadership as times of national emergency. The historical impact of these events cannot be underestimated; they reinforced for the Israeli leadership and the national security establishment the need to take matters into their own hands and not to rely on any outside power for assistance. When considered with the emotional impact the Holocaust had upon each Israeli family, this is not a surprising development; the experiences of the 1948 war, the struggle of independence, and the subsequent Arab-Israeli conflict reinforced this perception.

⁹⁰ O'Neill, "Defense Policy of Israel," p. 378.

⁹¹ Handel, *Israel's Political-Military Doctrine*, p. 65.

Military Self-Sufficiency

In terms of its national security policies, Israel has sought self-reliance for two essentially interdependent reasons. The first is related to Israel's historical vulnerability to arms restrictions, and the second is tied to Israel's isolation in the international community.

With respect to Israel's access to military materiel, it is important to note that "Israel has been subject to two damaging arms embargoes in its history: the first during the War of Independence... and the second on the eve of the 1967 War." In 1948, the United States and the United Kingdom both halted the flow of weapons. The second incident occurred when France withheld military assistance in an unsuccessful attempt to dissuade Israel from going to war.⁹²

As a result, Israel has developed one of the world's most advanced military industries. Israel has become a world leader in pioneering new technologies and has benefited from field testing most new weapons systems in regular operations by the IDF. In less than half a century, Israel has gone from a net importer of second-hand weapons to a high-tech defense exporter.⁹³ The defense industry in Israel is a key component in the critical national infrastructure, and self-reliance in this area has allowed Israeli leaders to choose a path of true independence and national self-interest without compromising foreign policy or national security goals to international political considerations.⁹⁴

⁹² Rodman, "Israel's National Security Doctrine," p. 80.

⁹³ In the early phases of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the American military contacted their Israeli counterparts to obtain replacements for their arsenals depleted during the Afghan and Iraqi campaigns.

⁹⁴ One notable exception to this statement was Israel's cancellation of a major weapons deal with China due to US objections. In 2000, Israel agreed to sell China three Phalcon airborne early warning systems. Washington expressed serious concerns about equipping a potential adversary with advanced detection systems in light of American defense commitments in East Asia. Israel eventually cancelled the sale.

The continued qualitative development of Israel's defense industry is dependent upon second-generation sales to third countries in order to generate the funds to reinvest in the research and development of newer and more sophisticated weapons systems. In conducting such sales, Israel continues to bolster its own defense against numerically superior adversaries while at the same time maintaining knowledge of the arms inventories of other states, some of which may not always remain friendly. Weapons sales and refurbishments in relation to Central Asia have been noteworthy and will be detailed in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

Lack of Alliances

Throughout its history Israel has existed without any formal alliances: "Israel is militarily and, to a lesser extent, politically isolated from the rest of the world; it is not a member of any political or military alliance and *must ultimately rely completely on its own power in case of emergency.*"⁹⁵ This is due to several reasons, chiefly the perception in the international community of Israel as a pariah state; that is, over time, the policies of the State of Israel have caused many nations to reconsider formal alliances with Israel. As Israel's major international ally, the United States is committed to the defense of Israel; however, this exists outside of any formal alliance system. It is the result of American policy, and from the perception of many in the Israeli establishment, US policy is very valuable but it is not ironclad. Many in Congress may disagree with that assessment; however, their veracity—other than rhetorical or financial—has yet to be proven. Israel has been granted 'major non-NATO ally status' by the American government, yet this designation relates to

⁹⁵ Handel, *Israel's Political-Military Doctrine*, p. 64 (emphasis in original).

facilitating defense technology and materiel transfers and is not a collective security agreement.

Israel's alliance with Turkey is a major development in the history of Israeli foreign policy. The relationship between Israel and Ankara, however, is primarily a relationship of mutual interests. When those interests no longer overlap, due to local or regional developments, such cooperation may very well diminish. While there is substantial security and military cooperation, joint training, and so on between the two nations, from a reading of the publicly available material regarding the current arrangement, it also is not a collective security agreement.

GREAT POWER ASSOCIATIONS

One of the founding tenets of Israeli national security policy has been the deliberate policy to secure at least one "great power patron." This was laid out by Ben-Gurion and has been "a cardinal principle" of Israeli national security policy ever since. However, it is important to stress that Israeli policy also very carefully calls on Israel *not* to rely upon any outside power to defend the State of Israel. Through hundreds of years of anti-Semitism, history has proven that no other country or group of countries would act to defend the Jewish people, and this has been discussed earlier. As such, Israeli leaders took the early decision not to align with any great power. Britain had unsuccessfully worked to frustrate Zionist efforts to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and the international community and the United Nations failed to respond to Israel's calls for assistance during the 1948 War of Independence.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Rodman, "Israel's National Security Doctrine," p. 81.

Michael Handel has noted that although Israel has sought to maintain its neutrality, Israeli policy holds that a superpower ally could present Israel with great benefit. This association with a superpower, however, would not prevent Israel from acting in its own self-interest when such circumstances dictated. Handel adds that Israel would not refrain from military action to defend itself against any great power if need be.⁹⁷

Greater License

It has been noted that prior to three of Israel's regional wars in which Israel initiated combat, the Jewish state first sought and secured approval from its power patron at the time. In 1956, it "joined with" France—its great power patron then—and the United Kingdom in a preemptive attack against Egypt. Israel had also "secured initial American approval for its military plans in 1967 and 1982." It has been asserted that other than the 1948 War of Independence, Israel has had the "assistance of a great power patron in each Arab-Israeli war." This, in turn, has given Israel greater license to act in the international community.⁹⁸

Origins and Benefits

O'Neill has noted that this policy had its early origin in the 1950s when several factors coalesced. Increased Soviet support for the Arabs and restrictions on Jewish emigration were two of the developments which led Israel to grow closer to Western great powers.⁹⁹ The massive Soviet arms deal with Egypt in 1955 reinforced

⁹⁷ Handel, *Israel's Political-Military Doctrine*, p. 66.

⁹⁸ Rodman, "Israel's National Security Doctrine," p. 81.

⁹⁹ O'Neill, "Defense Policy of Israel," p. 378.

this position. In part, this policy development is a return to the relationship with Great Britain during the early Mandate period.

O'Neill further states that alignment with a great power benefits Israel in several ways. First and foremost are security concerns: Adversaries of Israel "might come to realize that violent opposition to Israel was no longer a sensible policy." In addition to having a powerful friend and ally, association with a great power would give Israel greater latitude in how it could respond to threats against its national security. Secondly, this type of a relationship could aid Israel in its "material assistance," both military and economic. The third benefit to the Jewish state is that "the legitimacy of Zionism would be increased." This last fact would contribute to the solidification of the state and would advance the Israeli foreign policy goals of international recognition and acceptance.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, the policy of alignment with a great power has been institutionalized policy since the 1950s, and today the United States serves as Israel's great power ally. The US-Israel relationship as it bears upon this present study will be discussed in the following chapter.

EMPHASIS ON INTELLIGENCE

The militaries and national security apparatuses of all states depend upon a judicious use of intelligence in order to better inform national security decision making. In Israel this is no different, and in fact it can be argued that Israeli national security planners are in many cases more dependent upon intelligence than their counterparts in other nations may be. Israel has always been surrounded by hostile and belligerent states and has been forced to adopt a strong defensive posture in order

¹⁰⁰ O'Neill, "Defense Policy of Israel," p. 378.

to survive amid so many detractors: "Given the ability of standing Arab forces to shift quickly from defensive to offensive deployments, Israeli military posture placed a premium on early warning."¹⁰¹ As a result, Israeli leaders have come to depend upon timely intelligence to best inform the national security decision-making process.

Intelligence As a Lever to Maximize Response Times

Due to Israel's unique geopolitical realities, accurate and useful intelligence is essential to the Jewish state's national security. Israel is at its most vulnerable during a conventional attack in the immediate onset, while the fighting is on Israeli territory and before the IDF can mobilize its reserves. Lacking strategic depth and possessing a relatively small standing army (regionally speaking), Israeli national security policy places a premium on informed intelligence. At its narrowest point, Israel is merely miles wide and backed against the Mediterranean Sea; there is no room in which to withdraw. As a result, defense doctrine calls for the IDF to quickly push enemy forces out of Israeli territory and for the majority of fighting to be conducted on non-Israeli soil. One analyst has identified this as "offensive maneuver warfare,"¹⁰² and added that it comprises part of the Israeli security disposition to wage "preventative and preemptive war."¹⁰³ Israel is also numerically outnumbered by foes who have utilized their superior numbers in combat without warning at least twice—in 1948 and again in 1973. The Israeli army is a comparatively small force, with the bulk of its numbers serving in reserve units. The reservists require time to be mobilized¹⁰⁴ and "because of the time required to mobilize and deploy the reserves, a premium was

¹⁰¹ Heller, *Continuity and Change*, p. 13.

¹⁰² Rodman, "Israel's National Security Doctrine," p. 76.

¹⁰³ Rodman, "Israel's National Security Doctrine," p. 72.

¹⁰⁴ This in part can account for the reasons why the reserves are periodically mobilized. When the General Staff and National Security Council believe that the national security is at risk, Israeli leaders often now preemptively call up the reserves in order to best defend the state and shorten the time of response.

placed on advanced warning from a high-quality intelligence apparatus.”¹⁰⁵ Proper intelligence warnings—such as those that were ignored in 1973—can help shorten the time in which the IDF is able to properly engage in offensive maneuver warfare.¹⁰⁶ Speed is crucial in Israeli strategic planning in order to end a conflict before the international community can interfere;¹⁰⁷ this is in part a result of the negative perception held by many in the security establishment in Israel who view the international community and United Nations as biased. The proper use of intelligence can ameliorate these security conditions; it can quicken Israeli response time and shorten the time in which Israel is at its most vulnerable.

Intelligence plays a critical role when national security is considered in terms of the threat environment Israel must inhabit. As outlined above, from the viewpoint of Israeli national security planners, given Israel’s situational permanence it follows that the state must be prepared to defend itself. Proper intelligence can better inform those decisions and “because the threat to the security of the state is perceived as continuous, a constant state of alert must be maintained by the IDF, especially by the intelligence force and the air force.”¹⁰⁸

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

By its very nature, the national security of an attentive state is most often challenged by external threats which emerge from outside the control those responsible for implementing the state’s national security policies. It is therefore necessary for those responsible to take whatever actions they can to mitigate the effects of external developments which may have a negative impact on national

¹⁰⁵ O’Neill, “Defense Policy of Israel,” p. 379.

¹⁰⁶ For more on the use of reservists in the IDF, see Rodman, “Israel’s National Security Doctrine,” p. 73-75.

¹⁰⁷ Handel, *Israel’s Political-Military Doctrine*, p. 66.

¹⁰⁸ Handel, *Israel’s Political-Military Doctrine*, p. 67.

security. In Israel, this means that decisions need to be made when and where it is best for the state, a fact which has been described above as Israel's propensity to engage in "preventative and preemptive war,"¹⁰⁹ especially when confronted with existential threats.

Preventative and Preemptive War

This active response in Israel often requires Israeli national security planners and decision makers to exercise policy options designed to improve and safeguard national security on Israel's own timetable. Events cannot and will not wait for Israeli leaders to act; rather, they must seize the initiative when they can. Moreover, the international community has demonstrated its unwillingness to act to address challenges and threats to Israeli national security. When opportunities have presented themselves to advance national security, Israeli decision makers have historically been given narrow windows in which to operate.

This ability to seize the strategic initiative is a means by which Israeli national security planners can improve their control over the events that will affect and shape the regional and international security and threat environment in which Israel exists. In doing so, Israeli national security planners are able to negate the numerous disadvantages of the Israeli case and maximize Israel's assets. This maxim has repeatedly been demonstrated throughout the existence of the Jewish state.

There are numerous examples of times in which Israeli leaders have employed strategic initiative to address national security challenges. Some of these examples include the overt use of military force as in the 1956 Suez War, the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, and the 1978 and 1982 invasions of Lebanon. Other examples of when Israel

¹⁰⁹ Rodman, "Israel's National Security Doctrine," p. 72.

acted to use the strategic initiative to advance national security objectives can be seen in the repeated attempts to derail the Iraqi nuclear program, culminating in June 1981's preemptive air strike to destroy the Iraqi nuclear program at Osirak. In April 1979 Mossad operatives destroyed "two cores destined for the Tammuz nuclear reactor"—components for Iraq's nuclear program—"at the French port of La Seyne-sur-Mer," and in June 1980, Israeli agents assassinated Yahya al Mashad, "an Egyptian nuclear physicist overseeing the Iraqi-Egyptian cooperation on nuclear development."¹¹⁰

* * * * *

This chapter has attempted to detail the origins and foundations of Israeli national security policy in order to provide a basis from which to approach the focus of this thesis, Israel's interaction with Central Asia during the decade from 1991 to 2001. As Israeli policy in the aftermath of the collapse of Soviet power in Central Asia was chiefly aimed at preventing the emergence of new threats to national security, it is hoped that this chapter will serve as a touchstone for the concepts and issues which are to be discussed in subsequent chapters. The next chapter will examine the application of Israeli national security policy and explore how Israel utilized its policy of national security to interact with the newly independent states of Central Asia.

¹¹⁰ Hiro, *Essential Middle East*, s.v. "Military in Israel," pp. 326-327.

CHAPTER THREE: ISRAELI POLICY TOWARDS CENTRAL

ASIA: OBJECTIVES, PERCEPTIONS, CONCERNS, AND

OPPORTUNITIES

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of independent states in Central Asia was an event no one had prepared for, much less anticipated. Israeli leaders, just like their counterparts throughout the world, were caught completely by surprise at the pace of events. Israeli foreign policy was forced to confront a dramatic event and rapidly assess the situation to determine how it would impact the State of Israel, its national security, and its relations with the rest of the world.

Building upon the previous chapter which outlined the origins and foundations of Israeli national security policy, this chapter applies that framework to the question of how Israel approached the former Soviet Central Asian republics. This chapter examines Israel's nine interrelated policy objectives in the region and details how these strategic objectives reflect the basic national security tenets which have directed Israeli foreign policy. Because the region was an unknown entity for Israeli policy makers, the popular preconceptions of Central Asia—and the security dilemmas the region posed—are explored. This is intended to both frame the discussions which will follow in the next chapters and underscore the basic perception within Israel's foreign policy community that the emergence of five new 'Muslim' states had the potential to have a negative impact their national security.

To further inform our analysis, both the threats and opportunities presented by the collapse of the Soviet Union in Central Asia are assessed. Together, these potential dangers and possible openings served as challenges for Israeli policy and motivated Israeli policy planners to engage these new republics. These developments were considered to be security issues; thus their impact on Israeli national security is explored here.

The end of Soviet power in Central Asia led numerous analysts and observers to herald the arrival of a revived 'Great Game': a now global competition for influence and strategic access in the area. The relative merits and advantages of a wide range of actors (the United States, Russian Federation, People's Republic of China, Turkey, Islamic Republic of Iran, and even Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and India) has heretofore been chronicled. To date, however, there has been little attention focused on the role of the State of Israel in the former Soviet South. Curiously, it is the State of Israel that has quietly developed the closest and greatest relationship with the Muslim republics of Central Asia.

In the first ten years of their independence, the State of Israel established extremely close relations with the new nations of the region. By following traditional foreign policy objectives, Israel achieved its goals and neutralized potential threats in the region. In relatively little time, it achieved very close diplomatic, economic, and security ties with Central Asia, virtually unnoticed by the outside world.

Israel became a very successful player in Central Asia, influencing everything from pipeline construction to defense spending. Understanding the actions and intentions of this little-studied actor is rapidly growing in importance as the region

continues to evolve. It is the aim of this chapter to analyze the origins of Israeli policy towards Central Asia and to explore how and why Israel approached the region.

RELATIONS WITH THE REPUBLICS

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel officially established diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan in February 1992; Kyrgyzstan in March 1992; Kazakhstan and Tajikistan in April of 1992; and, over a year later with Turkmenistan in October 1993.¹¹¹ For the leadership of the republics, "ties with Israel symbolized an antifundamentalist orientation. A pro-Israel outlook was understood to enhance one's standing in the West."¹¹² Relations with Israel were also sought because Israel was seen as a conduit to Western aid dollars. This notion should not be overlooked. With little advance warning, the Central Asian republics were transformed from subsidized and protected components of a global superpower to third world states with no experience of modern independent governance.

Israel was also viewed by the republics as very much an example to emulate. It is only one of a handful of smaller states that have both successfully industrialized and been able to maintain a strong defense posture.¹¹³ "Israel's powerful image promises much to these countries, which perceive it as a model state: small but politically and economically strong, and both democratic and secular."¹¹⁴ As Raphael Israeli has written, Israel demonstrated that through modern technology, scientific

¹¹¹ Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Israel's Diplomatic Missions Abroad," <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il>.

¹¹² Daniel Pipes, "The Event of Our Era: Former Soviet Muslim Republics Change the Middle East," in *Central Asia and the World: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan*, ed. Michael Mandelbaum (New York, 1994), p. 83.

¹¹³ Jonathan R. Adelman, *Torrents of Spring: Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics* (London, 1995), pp. 64-65.

¹¹⁴ Bülent Aras, "Post-Cold War Realities: Israel's Strategy in Azerbaijan and Central Asia," *Middle East Policy* 5, no. 4 (January 1998): p. 69.

means, and “certain sociopolitical” values, small nations can be powerful and advanced countries.¹¹⁵ One of the most attractive motivations for the establishment of positive relations with Israel originated in the perception that positive ties with Israel would lead to positive ties with the United States. Israeli influence and capability is often very much exaggerated; however, Israel does maintain disproportionate influence in Washington, DC.¹¹⁶ Quoting the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, the *Times of Central Asia* stated that “many countries around the world believe that one of the surest routes to better relations with Washington is to win over the ‘Jewish lobby’ in America—a notion that many Jewish leaders are reluctant to disabuse them of.”¹¹⁷ It is important to keep in mind that the relationship between Israel and the republics was not purely a one-way avenue of exchange: Israel was—and is—a very attractive partner for these new states.

The Russian newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* ran a noteworthy article on 20 January 1992. Entitled “USA Encourages Muslim Republics to Follow Turkey: Israel Makes Inroads,” it stated that officials of Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs “recommended that diplomatic missions be opened” in the republics “and that they be offered the services of experts in all spheres—from agriculture to defense.” This article appeared several weeks before Israel actually began its diplomatic efforts in the region and demonstrates very clearly that the State of Israel had a plan of action to secure its influence in the republics. The article concludes by quoting “a high-ranking Israeli spokesman” who stated that “until they have decided what route to follow, we

¹¹⁵ Raphael Israeli, “Return to the source: the republics of Central Asia and the Middle East,” *Central Asian Survey* 13, no. 1 (1994): p. 29.

¹¹⁶ Brenda Schaffer, PhD (University of Haifa, Israel), in discussion with the author 4 November 2005, Jerusalem.

¹¹⁷ “Jews in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan live in Muslim Worlds,” *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), citing *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 13 March 2003.

have an opportunity to penetrate them and influence events.” As this chapter shall illustrate, this goal was very successfully accomplished.¹¹⁸

ISRAELI OBJECTIVES IN CENTRAL ASIA

The creation of five new independent Muslim nations was not a development widely perceived by Israeli policy makers as one that would be of benefit to their national security concerns. This is in large part due to the Israeli trend of ‘primacy of security’ dating back to the founding of the state; this belief “holds that almost every problem is a security problem, or at least involves security aspects.”¹¹⁹ A multitude of interests was at stake in the region, and in order to address the fast-moving new realities being created on the ground in Central Asia, Israel needed to create a framework with which to engage the republics. This strategic framework was primarily intended to ensure the continued security of the State of Israel and was composed of several longstanding Israeli foreign policy objectives. Israeli foreign policy objectives would be furthered by ensuring that the republics did not align themselves against Israel and preventing the republics from falling under either the influence of Iran or radical Islam. I have identified nine separate yet interdependent strategic objectives which Israeli policy sought to achieve. These nine interdependent objectives are as follows:

- to prevent the spread of Iranian influence among the states of the former Soviet Union;
- to curb the development of hostile regimes and curtail the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs);

¹¹⁸ “USA encourages Muslim republics to follow Turkey: Israel makes inroads,” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (Moscow), in Russian, 20 January 1992, in *British Broadcasting Corporation, Summary of World Broadcast* (hereafter *BBC SWB*) SU/1285 A4/2[3]23 (January 1992).

¹¹⁹ Uri Bar-Joseph, “Towards a Paradigm Shift in Israel’s National Security Conception,” *Israel Affairs* 6, no. 3 & 4, (Spring/Summer 2000): p. 105.

- to remove the emphasis on the Arab world within the Greater Middle East;
- to avert the focus from the Middle East peace process;
- to maintain and expand the strategic relationship with the United States;
- to foster the creation of 'moderate' Muslim states;
- to encourage the development of an economic hinterland;
- to expand and support domestic military preparedness and technologies through the sale of military hardware to foreign states; and
- to ensure the protection of local Jewish communities and cultural heritage.

For the purposes of this thesis, these nine Israeli policy objectives have been divided into four primary means of implementation: diplomatic efforts, economic and commercial relations, development assistance, and military and security cooperation. In later chapters which focus on Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, these components will be examined in detail. Because the primary focus of this study addresses security concerns, the religious and cultural aspects of Israel's relationship with Central Asia will be discussed briefly and only as warranted. A thorough examination of the religious, cultural, and historical links is much beyond the scope of this present work, and is deserving of a separate treatment. For this reason, there will be little mention of the region's Jewish communities and how they are a factor vis-à-vis Israeli-Central Asian relations, except within the context of security policy making.

In order to better understand Israeli policy towards Central Asia it is essential to detail the rationale and logic motivating Israel's actions. The following is an attempt to place the nine policy concerns and objectives in the context of Israeli national security policy.

PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF IRANIAN INFLUENCE

Israel's primary strategic objective in Central Asia was to block the spread of Iranian influence.¹²⁰ This view was also echoed by Ephraim Sneh who had long taken a serious interest in Israel's policies toward Central Asia.¹²¹ The emergence of an independent Central Asia led many Western observers to fear that these new republics could eventually fall under the sway of Iran. In 1993, two American academics often associated with the thinking in Israel claimed that "looking at the world through the combined filters of fundamentalist Islam and resurgent Persian nationalism, they [the Iranian government] aspire to a sphere of influence that includes Iraq, the Transcaucasus, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf."¹²²

Writing in *Amu Darya: The Iranian Journal of Central Asian Studies*, published by the Iranian Foreign Ministry's in-house think tank, Mohammad-Reza Maleki observes that "Israel still considers Iran as a main strategic threat."¹²³ According to the stance of Israeli national security policy, the development of an Iranian sphere of influence in Central Asia would have a negative impact on Israeli national security.¹²⁴ At the time, Israeli security planners viewed not only all of its immediate neighbors (including Egypt, in the event that a future Egyptian government might reverse and revoke the Camp David Accords) as potential adversaries, but also the rejectionist hard-line Arab states of Libya, Iraq, and especially Persian Iran. The

¹²⁰ David Menashri, PhD (Senior Research Fellow at The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Tel Aviv University), interview with the author, 7 July 1999, Tel Aviv, Israel.

¹²¹ Ephraim Sneh, MD (Member of Knesset), in a telephone interview the author, 4 November 2005, Tel Aviv, Israel.

¹²² Daniel Pipes and Patrick Clawson, "Ambitious Iran, Troubled Neighbors," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 1 (January-February 1993): p. 126.

¹²³ Mohammad-Reza Maleki, "Turkish-Israeli Relations: Impacts on Central Asia and the Caucasus," *Amu Darya: The Iranian Journal of Central Asian Studies* (Teheran) 4, no. 2 (summer 1999): p. 182.

¹²⁴ "Iran, Central Asia and Israel: Quality, Situation, and the Interests," *Middle East Quarterly* (Teheran) 1, no. 3 (Winter 1995), <http://www.netiran.com/Htdocs/Clippings/FPolitics/951200XXFP01.html> (accessed 6 April 2002).

possibility that the Central Asian republics might follow the Iranian model of development and align against Israel was a very real concern.

In examining Israel's goals in the region, Rasul Yalcin notes that Israel was eager "to weaken any attempts by Iran to rally the Islamic world against it."¹²⁵ In addition to Israeli efforts, American supporters of Israel took action to block Iranian influence in the region. Eleven major American Jewish organizations actively encouraged the US Congress to pass the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999 in part to prevent Iranian efforts "to bring the nations of the region into its sphere of influence."¹²⁶ Both the United States and Israel recognized the danger; one of the conclusions from Israel's bilateral strategic talks with the United States in 1997 was that Iran poses "a threat to the former Soviet republics of Central Asia... and Israel."¹²⁷

An Iranian Shift of Focus, Not an Israeli Change in Perception

Towards the late 1990s, Iran shifted its emphasis to focus on improving its economic links with the Central Asian states: "Iran has concentrated on its trade links more than anything else. Of course one can argue that commercial ties increase the political presence."¹²⁸ Israel's efforts to frustrate Iran's early objectives clearly increased the difficulty that the Iranian regime encountered in Central Asia. However, simply because Iran no longer sought to actively export its fiery brand of revolutionary Islam does not mean that Iran ceased being a threat in the eyes of Israeli

¹²⁵ Rasul Yalcin, *The Rebirth of Uzbekistan: Politics, Economy, and Society in the Post-Soviet Era* (Reading, UK, 2002), p. 273.

¹²⁶ "Urgent: Tell your Senators to vote for the Silk Road Strategy Act," report prepared by the B'nai B'rith Center for Public Policy, June 1999, <http://bnaibrith.org/cpp/randa/silkroad699.html> (accessed on 5 April 2001).

¹²⁷ Arie O'Sullivan, "US, Israel conclude strategic dialogue," *The Jerusalem Post*, 6 June 1997.

¹²⁸ Julia Nanay (Petroleum Finance Corporation), "Iran's Role in Central Asia: A Dialogue with AIPAC" (lecture at event sponsored by the Middle East Institute and Johns Hopkins University-SAIS Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Washington, DC, 24 September 1998).

policy makers. Iran's ambitious program to acquire WMD and advanced missile technology was, and remains to this day, of prime concern. Likewise, Iran's recent efforts to forge an informal grouping of nations sharing Persian heritage and language¹²⁹ are viewed by the Israeli Foreign Ministry as an attempt to covertly promote Iranian influence through seemingly innocuous means.¹³⁰ In the view of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Iran needs all the friends it can get to continually offset the tensions it encounters in the international community.¹³¹ Iran's attempts to shift to economic cooperation¹³² are equally disturbing to Israeli policy makers, especially when it comes to infrastructure projects and road and rail construction. When Iranians are involved, according to the Israeli Foreign Ministry, such long-term projects mean that the Iranians establish an equally long-term presence in a country and over time will work to make that presence—and its accompanying influence—permanent.¹³³

Throughout the period covered in this thesis, Israel's prime objective has been to prevent Iran from establishing a threatening presence in Central Asia. This theme—based largely upon the Israeli perception of Iran as a grave threat to its national security—not only recurs throughout the decade after independence but well into the 21st century. The rise of catastrophic terrorism, the emergence of violent radical Islamist militancy, and the spotlight on Eurasia created by the US-led global war on terror has reaffirmed for many the dangers posed by dangerous regimes which operate outside the international consensus. Iran's continued support for militant

¹²⁹ Based upon discussions held with Iranian foreign ministry employees in Teheran, Iran, February 2004.

¹³⁰ Ofer Moreno (Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the State of Israel to the Republic of Uzbekistan), interview with the author, 13 March 2006, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

¹³¹ Moreno, interview.

¹³² W. Nathaniel Howell, "Iran's Policy in Northwest Asia: Opportunities, Challenges, and Implications," in *Iran and the Gulf: A Search for Stability*, ed. Jamal S. al-Suwaidi (London, 1996), p. 182.

¹³³ Moreno, interview.

terrorist organizations bent upon targeting Israel, the new Iranian regime's threatening and bellicose rhetoric with regards to Israel's existence, and Teheran's ongoing nuclear program all serve to reinforce the perception that Iran is a mortal threat to the security and safety of Israel. As long as Central Asia remains one of the venues in which Iran may engage in provocative behavior against Israeli interests, this view will endure.

CURBING THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOSTILE REGIMES AND THE SPREAD OF WMDs

In order to maintain its security, Israeli policy has sought to curb—or at least not promote—the emergence of hostile governments which may eventually engage in hostilities with Israel. In the past, this policy has produced some notable failures, including the rise of Hamas in the Occupied Territories and Hezbollah in Lebanon. The five new Central Asian states were perceived to be at risk of developing along the same path as the regime in Iran. Such a development posed considerable risks, especially due to the presence of Soviet-era nuclear arms. As one analyst noted, “[T]he existence of nuclear weapons and technology in Central Asia worries Israel and increases the strategic importance of the region.”¹³⁴

Maleki asserts in *Amu Darya* that the “possibility of nuclear proliferation in the region is a prime concern for Israel.”¹³⁵ Yalcin moreover identifies the “ultimate disposition of nuclear weapons (in Kazakhstan), and their possible transfer to such enemies as Iran”¹³⁶ as one of Israel's three main concerns in Central Asia. A further

¹³⁴ Aras, “Post-Cold War Realities,” p. 78.

¹³⁵ Maleki, “Turkish-Israeli Relations,” p. 190.

¹³⁶ Yalcin, *Rebirth of Uzbekistan*, p. 273.

fear concerns the possible rise of “Islamic terror groups in Pakistan and the Central Asian republics” and Pakistan’s nuclear capability.¹³⁷

After the collapse of Soviet power in Central Asia, the threat of WMD proliferation became one of the three main dangers that Israel faced in its dealings with the region and this will be examined in greater detail later in this chapter.

DILUTING THE ‘CONCEPT OF AN ARAB MIDDLE EAST’

From an Israeli security perspective, the State of Israel has always been at risk due to its situational permanence. As noted in the previous chapter, Israel cannot change the very real fact that it is numerically outnumbered by enemies, both real and perceived. Furthermore, Israel has often risked being defined by its Arab neighbors. That is to say, Israel has often been defined by what it is not—Arab and Muslim—rather than what it is. This tendency has the effect of placing the State of Israel on the defensive. Twenty-two Arab states, it is feared, have the option of speaking with one voice, however rarely it is used. Whether it is to denounce Israeli behavior towards its Arab neighbors in such venues as the Arab League or Non-Aligned Movement or in the attempts to link Zionism with racism through the United Nations General Assembly,¹³⁸ in the past the Arab states have sought to use their greater numbers to isolate Israel, not just regionally but internationally. Israel, for its part, has refused to engage the Arab world as one entity. Examples of this tactic have included Israel’s refusal to sit down simultaneously with all parties at the peace process talks¹³⁹ and the

¹³⁷ B. Raman, “National Missile Defense-Theatre Missile Defense: Right Question, Wrong Answer,” South Asia Analysis Group paper number 22, Executive Assessment, 18 May 2001, <http://www.saag.org/papers3/paper242.html> (accessed 17 November 2001).

¹³⁸ See Robert O. Freedman, “Israel and Central Asia: A Preliminary Analysis,” *Central Asia Monitor*, no. 2 (1993): pp. 16-20.

¹³⁹ With the notable exception of the opening of the Madrid peace talks, Israel has repeatedly refused to engage all parties to the talks at once, and this Israeli acquiescence came about due to US pressure following the 1991 Gulf War. This is based on author’s experience working at the US Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and

Sharon government's non-answer to the Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Abdullah's peace initiative offered at the 22nd Summit of the Arab League, held in Beirut, Lebanon, in March 2002.¹⁴⁰

Dating back to Ben-Gurion's Periphery Policy, Israel has historically sought to break out of this restrictive labeling and reach out to other non-Arab peoples in the Middle East. The development of Israel's close ties with Turkey can be viewed as a natural progression of this tendency. The creation of five new non-Arab, culturally Muslim states abutting the region gave the opportunity for Israeli policy to again advance the concept of a greater Middle East.¹⁴¹ As an Iranian journal noted, "[T]ies with Central Asia... has somewhat diluted the concept of an Arab Middle East. And from a strategic point of view, the proximity of this region with Iran, makes the issue even more significant for Israel."¹⁴²

AVERTING THE FOCUS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

For Israel, the Middle East peace process is not just about establishing peace and security with its immediate neighbors; it has also come to be a prerequisite to greater international recognition and acceptance and by extension, greater security. Thus, Israel's efforts are intended not just for Arab consumption but for international consumption; peace with its neighbors, per the Israeli perspective, can also serve as a means to solidify the security of the state, both regionally and internationally. Through negotiating settlements with its Arab neighbors, Israel stands not only to

Palestinian Affairs on the 9th round of the Middle East peace process talks held in Washington, DC, during the summer of 1993.

¹⁴⁰ Under the Saudi initiative, all 22 members of the Arab League agreed to recognize Israel in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian territories. Many observers at the time noted that this proposal was very similar to that which had been offered by Saudi King Faisal which also went unanswered (based upon discussion with a Saudi diplomat, March 2002, Washington, DC).

¹⁴¹ "Iran, Central Asia and Israel," <http://www.netiran.com/> (accessed 6 April 2002).

¹⁴² "Iran, Central Asia and Israel," <http://www.netiran.com/> (accessed 6 April 2002).

secure the safety of its citizens but also to gain the international recognition that it has long sought. For example, through acceptance Israel's permanent position in the United Nations would be finally established as either an Asian, Middle Eastern, or even European member.

The Israeli public and policy makers alike are well aware of the impact the peace process has on the state's international standing. From the perspective of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, the number of nations with full diplomatic relations with Israel is often used as an informal measure of the success of Israeli foreign policy. As mentioned previously, following the Oslo Accords, the number of nations recognizing Israel rose to an all-time high. This demonstrates the importance other nations have placed upon Israel's relationship with the Palestinians. Not only does engagement with the Palestinians and Israel's other neighbors move Israel closer to international normalization, it also undercuts the popular international perception of Israel as being an anti-Muslim state.

Therefore, it is not surprising that during previous lulls and hiatuses in the peace talks, Israel's relationship with the Central Asian republics truly began to emerge. As the peace talks slow down or falter, Israel continues to advance its goal of eliminating the anti-Muslim perception. At the time, this fact was widely written about in the Arab and Iranian press. Many Arab commentators saw links between the Netanyahu government's intransigence in negotiations and the development of ties with Central Asia. Israel and Netanyahu were charged with avoiding the "consequences of economic cooperation"¹⁴³ and "sidestepping the Arab world."¹⁴⁴ Likewise, for engaging Israel while the peace process withered, the republics were also subjected to a wide range of criticisms, ranging from charges of authoritarianism

¹⁴³ "Netanyahu seen trying to sidestep the Arabs by forging ties with Central Asian States," *Mideast Mirror* 12, no. 122 (1 July 1998): p. 19, quoting Atef al-Gomhari, *al-Ahram* (Cairo), 1 July 1998.

¹⁴⁴ "Netanyahu seen trying," p. 19.

to allegations that these nations had renounced Islam.¹⁴⁵ When looking back at the recent history of the Arab-Israeli peace process, one can now discern trends regarding the status of Israeli-Central Asian relations in which, during lulls in the negotiating process, Israel would ramp up its engagement with the former Soviet republics to offset diplomatic slowdowns closer to home.

Muslim Eurasia represented an opportunity for Israel to expand the number of non-Arab Muslim nations with which it deals in order to offset the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is important because as the perception that Israel is anti-Muslim decreases, Israel's position vis-à-vis the peace talks increases. If Israel is able to remove, or at least lessen, the role of religion in the peace process, the negotiations become more a discussion about real estate and less a confrontation over who owned the land first. In a sense, this policy is also about defusing international Muslim rage so that the negotiations can become a question of where to draw a line on a map and not a challenge to a nation's legitimacy and sovereignty. Israel was fearful that the Central Asian states might align themselves against Israel and against its position vis-à-vis the peace process: "If these republics become [*sic*] Muslim states, Jews fear, they will also turn anti-Israeli and, by extension, anti-Jewish."¹⁴⁶

Central Asia and the Peace Process

Most of the states in the Middle East sought relationships with the Central Asian republics. A number of actors in the region attempted to win over the new states to their perspective on Middle East issues (such as the status of Jerusalem, the state of the peace process, and the general question of the role of religion in society).

¹⁴⁵ See, e.g., "Uzbekistan's 'unholy alliance' with Israel," *Mideast Mirror* 12, no. 235 (21 October 1998): p. 12, quoting Mohammad al-Sammak, *al-Ahram* (Cairo), 21 October 1998.

¹⁴⁶ Azinat Hayat Khan, "Economic cooperation between Pakistan and the Central Asian republics," *Defense Journal* (May 1998), <http://www.defencejournal.com/may98/economic1.htm> (accessed 22 June 2001).

Israel was particularly concerned that the republics would side with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and it is important to bear in mind that at the time of independence, the PLO was still an illegal organization (from the Israeli perspective) and was banned from the Occupied Territories. The potential entry of five more Muslim nations into the 'rejectionist front' of nations opposed to the State of Israel drew the attention of both the Israelis and the PLO, but none more so than a nuclear-armed Kazakhstan. For Israel this issue raised serious concern, and diplomatic activity by both the Israelis and the Palestinians quickly followed. Shireen Hunter has noted that "ties with Central Asia were more important for Israel when it had not made peace with Jordan and the PLO."¹⁴⁷

This race for the republics was not just between Israel and the Palestinians. Shortly after Israel began its diplomatic blitz in Central Asia, Syria also made the rounds in the region, and "the ensuing competition had political, strategic, economic, ideological, and cultural dimensions."¹⁴⁸ Within this same time frame, other states, most notably Iran and Saudi Arabia, also joined the fray.

MAINTAINING THE STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES

Over the course of the Cold War, Israel's strategic importance to the United States grew. Israel was perceived to be a Western-oriented outpost of freedom and democracy amid a host of hostile and unstable nations aligned against Western interests. This perception increased during the Reagan Administration, when US-Israeli relations were at their height. It is important to note that with the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc, Israel's leaders feared that its strategic relationship with Washington would also wane.

¹⁴⁷ Shireen T. Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence* (London, 1996), p. 143.

¹⁴⁸ Pipes, "Event of Our Era," p. 48.

Coming as it did in the aftermath of the Shamir loan guarantee debacle and Washington's displeasure with "the Likud settlement policy in the West Bank and Gaza,"¹⁴⁹ the collapse of the Soviet Union occurred at a time of particular strain in the US-Israeli relationship. After Israel had agreed to refrain from striking back at Iraq after Israel was subjected to repeated Scud missile attacks, had endured the fear that their enemies would *perceive* this inactivity as a lack of Israeli nerve to use force when push came to shove, and had been cajoled by the Americans to participate in the Madrid Peace Process, Israeli-American relations were quite stressed. It was only natural that Israel would fear that its importance to its most important ally would decrease in the post-Cold War era.

Israel's continued national security was dependent upon not being made redundant to its primary sponsor, the United States. It is central to Israeli national security policy to maintain very close ties with the United States, as outlined in the preceding chapter. The maintenance of a great power relationship is one of the major pillars of Israeli national security policy. Israel benefits greatly from this relationship and in the post-Cold War environment, it was vital that ties with America continue unchanged in strength.

Through a very well orchestrated campaign, Israel has been able to redefine itself as a bulwark against fundamentalism and specifically Iranian Shi'a extremism now that the war against Communism has been won.¹⁵⁰ Since the events of 11 September 2001, Israel has further tried to cast itself as being on the frontlines of the war on terrorism. In depicting itself as an outpost of liberal democracy battling Sunni Islamist radicalism, Israel portrays itself as the first line of defense against al-Qaeda—

¹⁴⁹ Jacob Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in Asia: Garrison State Diplomacy*, (London, 2004), p. 427.

¹⁵⁰ Michael Parks, "Israel calls itself bulwark against 'Islamic terror'," *The Los Angeles Times*, 3 January 1993.

directed or –inspired terrorism. By replacing the ‘Red menace’ of Communism with the ‘Green peril’ of Islamist radicalism, Israel has played to the concerns of its benefactors and will continue to receive the nearly \$3 billion in combined annual assistance from Washington. It was written at the time (February 1993, just over a year into Central Asian independence) that “Israel is raising the war cry against Iran to recreate the comfortable situation it used to enjoy as Washington’s ‘strategic asset’ against communism. Iran and its Islamic revolution are simply the handiest solution.”¹⁵¹

This is neither to propose that Israel is not in a dangerous neighborhood nor to deny that it is faced daily with very real threats of its own. The violent al-Aqsa Intifadah, the rise of a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, the continued Iranian support for Palestinian rejectionist groups, and Teheran’s ongoing nuclear program are all proof of Israel’s very real and very precarious security situation. The threats that Israel confronts do not *originate* in Central Asia; however, the threat that they may *manifest* themselves in Central Asia is very real and it drives Israeli policy in the region. Writing before 11 September 2001, former Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh noted that “Iran’s reach can be felt from the Middle East to Uzbekistan.”¹⁵²

In sum, the threat of resurgent militant Islam in Central Asia in large part continues to allow Israel to maintain its qualitative military edge courtesy of the United States.

FOSTERING THE CREATION OF ‘MODERATE’ MUSLIM STATES

This point closely follows the preceding objective: as discussed in the preceding chapter, Israeli national security doctrine has held that over time, the

¹⁵¹ “Shaul Eisenberg emerges from the shadows,” *Israeli foreign affairs* IX, no. 2 (26 February 1993), p. 4.

¹⁵² Ephraim Sneh, “We can’t abandon the spirit of Entebbe,” *Washington Jewish Week*, 5 July 2001.

security and stability of the state can be guaranteed only through the establishment of full peace and integration with its neighbors. As such, it is essential to encourage and foster the growth of what Israeli leaders would term 'moderate' Muslim states—Muslim states friendly to Israel. Some reports have even gone as far as stating that Israel's intentions in the region were to ensure that the republics remained secular.¹⁵³

Just a year after Central Asian independence, it was observed that, from Israel's perspective, Islamic radicalism was "sweeping across the Middle East, North Africa, and now Central Asia"¹⁵⁴ and would threaten regional stability and security. Radical Islam had the potential to become one of the greatest threats to stability in Central Asia. As has been mentioned previously, even the Iranian Foreign Ministry believed that the republics would 'return to Islam' after independence and form Islamic governments. Israel—as well as Turkey and the United States, and especially the region's other neighbors Russia and China—had "a common interest in preventing the radical Islamization of Central Asia."¹⁵⁵ Israel found common cause on this issue with the regimes in the region who also interpreted radical Islam as a threat to regional stability and security. As Shireen Hunter has observed, "[t]he Central Asian leaders share Israel's concerns about Islamic radicalism."¹⁵⁶

What Israeli leaders can do to influence such developments is arguably limited, and the Iranian revolution of 1979 is a prime example. Over the course of less than one year, Israel's closest ally in the region became its greatest adversary. The Iranian case is instructive because it demonstrates how quickly developments can

¹⁵³ Antoine Blua, "Israel Emerges as a Player in Central Asia," *Eurasianet.org*, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

¹⁵⁴ Parks, "Israel calls itself bulwark."

¹⁵⁵ Gulnara Yuldasheva, "Modern Uzbekistan: Problems of Development," *labyrinth: Central Asia Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1996): p. 40.

¹⁵⁶ Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence*, p. 143.

come to pass and underscores the fact that there is little permanency when it comes to Israeli security.

Israeli policy does incorporate allowances for some influence on its Muslim neighbors, in the form of both inducements and threats. The lure of trade, access to international lending and trade forums such as the World Trade Organization, and the impression that cordial relations with Israel can translate into positive relations with the United States¹⁵⁷ and other western nations are all often held out as benefits that would follow from a lack of enmity in dealing with Israel. Israeli policy often holds that when belligerent behavior goes uncorrected, negative repercussions may follow. Such repercussions may be in the form of threats of direct military action, covert activities, or coordination with Israel's primary benefactor and ally, the United States, in creating a unified policy position.

Ultimately, Israeli policy cannot much influence the pace or form of political Islam in its regional neighbors. It can act passively as a model for a secular state and provide hope for new nations, demonstrating that "by adopting certain sociopolitical means, by adapting to the technological and scientific environment of the modern world, and by internalizing certain values"¹⁵⁸ a nation can be led to stability and prosperity. What it can actively do, however, is to block, stymie, and frustrate the actions of other states such as Iran from spreading their influence.

¹⁵⁷ Many aspects of Israeli power and influence are overestimated by international observers. One area in which Israeli influence is quite substantial, however, can be found in Washington, DC where Israeli interests are often taken quite seriously. Israel has lobbied on behalf of several other nations, including Azerbaijan, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, and India (based in part on Brenda Schaffer, PhD [University of Haifa, Israel], in discussion with the author 4 November 2005, Jerusalem). Also see Dilip Hiro, "Uzbekistan: Karimov's Visit to Israel Cements Ties," *IPS News Reports*, n.p., n.d. and Hillel Kuttler, "Sharansky, Uzbekistan FM to boost ties through joint US appearances," *The Jerusalem Post*, 11 March 1999.

¹⁵⁸ Israeli, "Return to the source," p. 29.

ENCOURAGING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ECONOMIC HINTERLAND

Israel has a modern industrialized economy and both the Israeli public and private sectors actively seek out new markets. Likewise, pre-existing markets were also sought: As Robert O. Freedman wrote in 1993, "Israel, which had begun to develop economic ties to Central Asia in the final years of the Soviet Union, hoped to be able to further these ties, particularly because it could offer assistance in the agricultural sector, especially in the areas of irrigation, water management, and cotton growing."¹⁵⁹ Because of its sheer size and its vast resources Central Asia is an attractive area for economic cooperation. According to a report on Eurasianet.org, "[T]hough geographically distant from Central Asia, Israel is playing an increasingly significant economic role in the region."¹⁶⁰ The report cites several reasons for Israel's commercial relationship with the republics, including "the region's abundant natural resources, and its large pool of relatively cheap but skilled labor."¹⁶¹ Significantly, the size of the Central Asian market has been a prime motivator for Israeli economic investment: "Israel sees in Central Asia a potentially vast export market."¹⁶² The region "represents a potentially important market for specialized goods, such as machinery, chemicals, and plastics."¹⁶³ While in Uzbekistan leading a trade delegation, Minister of Industry and Trade Natan Sharansky noted that Israel exported "means of telecommunications, chemical fertilizers, machine tools, medical equipment, electric devices, agricultural produce, and plastic goods" to the region.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Freedman, "Israel and Central Asia," p. 17.

¹⁶⁰ Blua, "Israel Emerges," <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

¹⁶¹ Blua, "Israel Emerges," <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

¹⁶² Yuldasheva, "Modern Uzbekistan," p. 40.

¹⁶³ Blua, "Israel Emerges," <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

¹⁶⁴ "Israeli delegation to visit Uzbekistan," n.p., 27 June 1998, http://uzland.info/06_27_98.htm (accessed 8 April 2006).

Maleki, writing in *Amu Darya*, notes that “the expansion of economic ties” is an essential objective for Israeli policy in Central Asia.¹⁶⁵ As the Johns Hopkins University Central Asia-Caucasus Institute wrote, “Israel attempts through economic cooperation to support economic development in Central Asian countries, while pursuing active diplomacy in the region.”¹⁶⁶ Through greater economic cooperation with the Central Asian republics, Israel “will be able to expand its strategic depth within the region.”¹⁶⁷ This is to be accomplished in part through joint ventures and cooperation with Turkish businesses in order to achieve “greater access to markets of the Newly Independent States.”¹⁶⁸

Developments in Central Asia have the potential to dramatically impact Israeli national security due to the region’s proximity to the heart of the Middle East, the size of the Muslim population in the region, the possible rise of Islamic radicalism, and the region’s abundant natural resources.¹⁶⁹ As such, Israeli investment in Central Asia is critical to the state’s national security and economic health.¹⁷⁰ This was noted in an article in the *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*:

Israeli policy-makers on a special hearing acknowledged this fact in the Israeli Knesset, where one expert said that “...fledging partnership [with the republics of Central Asia] may be of cardinal importance to the economic future of Israel...” Some Israeli politicians attach even greater importance to Central Asia and claim the “the region holds the potential for Israel’s future growth and development, on one hand, and danger to Israel’s survival, on the other.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ Maleki, “Turkish-Israeli Relations,” p. 191.

¹⁶⁶ “Foreign Relations Between Israel and the Islamic Newly Independent States,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 6 August 1999, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/Archives/Issue%2012%20Aug%2099/Israel%20and%NIS.htm> (accessed 26 May 2000).

¹⁶⁷ Maleki, “Turkish-Israeli Relations,” p. 191.

¹⁶⁸ Maleki, “Turkish-Israeli Relations,” p. 190.

¹⁶⁹ “Foreign Relations,” <http://www.cacianalyst.org> (accessed 26 May 2000.)

¹⁷⁰ Hiro, “Uzbekistan.”

¹⁷¹ “Foreign Relations,” <http://www.cacianalyst.org> (accessed 26 May 2000).

The economic benefits of closer ties with Central Asia were touted by eleven American Jewish organizations in a B'nai B'rith Center for Public Policy report urging passage of the Silk Road Strategy Act of 1999. In addition to B'nai B'rith, Agudath Israel, the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League, Hadassah, Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, the Orthodox Union, and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations were all "strong supporters" of the legislation. The Silk Road Strategy Act was supported by these organizations in large part because "genuine independence, peace, and prosperity" for the republics would translate into benefits for "the national interests of the West, Israel, Turkey, and other regional allies." Such benefits would come not only through preventing Iranian influence but through greater investment by "émigrés to Israel [who] have returned to invest in the native lands."¹⁷²

Five American-Jewish organizations, including the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith, and the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, were "alerted to the economic and strategic importance of the region to Israeli" interests.¹⁷³ These five Jewish organizations wrote a letter of support on 22 June 1998 to Senator Sam Brownback (R-Kansas), the sponsor of the act. In their letter these groups wrote that passage of the legislation would

improve the lives of thousands of Jews. Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan have significant Jewish populations, and the latter three are countries with Muslim majorities that, nevertheless, have good relations with Israel and provide models for

¹⁷² "Urgent: Tell your Senators," <http://bnaibrith.org/cpp/randa/silkroad699.html> (accessed on 5 April 2001).

¹⁷³ Hershel Shanks and Suzanne F. Singer, "Oil and Jews on the Silk Road," *Moment* (Washington, DC) 23, no. 5 (October 1998), p. 75.

the Islamic world of the benefits of trade and commercial activity with the Jewish state.¹⁷⁴

SUPPORTING DOMESTIC MILITARY PREPAREDNESS THROUGH ARMS SALES

Central to Israeli military preparedness is the continued export of second-generation arms to friendly states. The Israeli defense industry is arguably one of the primary engines of the Israeli economy, if not its biggest single component. Some reports have indicated that Israel must sell arms, equipment, and technologies in excess of “\$2 billion in order to sustain itself at its current level.”¹⁷⁵ According to Yossi Ben Hanan, the head of SIBAT, Israel’s Defense Export Activity, “[T]he very survival of Israel [is linked] to an independent defense industrial base.”¹⁷⁶ Israel maintains its military superiority over its neighbors and regional enemies through a sustained qualitative advantage, which contributes significantly to Israel’s national security policy of deterrence and power projection: the Israeli military makes use of the best and latest technologies in order to always possess an unparalleled advantage over any potential adversary. While the United States and other western nations have done much to assist the Israeli military in maintaining its edge, it is ultimately the responsibility of Israel’s civilian and military leadership to ensure it never loses this edge.

In order to maintain this level of investment, the Israeli defense industry relies upon the sale of second-generation arms and technologies to friendly nations. The sale of such items generates income that is then reinvested in research, development, and production of the next generation of advanced weapons systems. By partially funding its military expenditures in such a fashion, Israel is able to continue

¹⁷⁴ Shanks and Singer, “Oil and Jews,” p. 75.

¹⁷⁵ Nicholas Fiorenza, “Center of Excellence: In a State of War Once Again, Israel Learns from Practice,” *Armed Forces Journal International*, (November 2001), p. 46.

¹⁷⁶ Fiorenza, “Center of Excellence,” p. 46.

maintaining its qualitative edge over its quantitatively superior adversaries. Such sales also serve a vital intelligence function: it allows Israel's national security establishment to know the disposition and capabilities of the militaries and security apparatuses of the foreign states to which it sells arms. This order of battle intelligence is of great use, either directly in the event of Israeli military action or indirectly if provided to an ally as a liaison favor.

It is interesting to note that one of the first exchanges between Israel and the republics was a "proposal to modernize MiG aircraft" in the CIS' arsenal.¹⁷⁷ The offer, from state-owned Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI), was made public by Channel 1 TV Moscow on 30 January 1992, at least 12 days *before* Israeli Ambassador to Moscow Aryeh Levin made his tour of Central Asia to begin the establishment of formal diplomatic relations.¹⁷⁸ Under the terms of the proposal, IAI would refit CIS "MiG-21 and MiG-23 military aircraft by installing up-to-date electronic equipment and Western manufactured radars."¹⁷⁹ This modernization program was intended not only to improve the survivability of CIS combat aircraft in the field but also to increase the potential Third World market "which formerly bought equipment and arms from the Soviet Union on a regular basis."¹⁸⁰ This episode demonstrates the early existence of Israel's military relationship with the republics. In a strange turn of events, a little over a week later, the Russian military offered to sell Israel "the super-modern MiG-29,"¹⁸¹ thereby trumping the Israeli upgrade offer and effectively negating the Israeli commercial deal.

¹⁷⁷ "Israel: proposal to modernize MiG aircraft," *Channel 1 TV* (Moscow), in Russian, 0300 GMT 30 January 1992, in *BBC SWB* SU/W0216 A/3[17] (7 February 1992).

¹⁷⁸ "Israel: proposal," in *BBC SWB* SU/W0216 A/3[17].

¹⁷⁹ "Israel: proposal," in *BBC SWB* SU/W0216 A/3[17].

¹⁸⁰ "Israel: proposal," in *BBC SWB* SU/W0216 A/3[17].

¹⁸¹ "MiG-29s reportedly on offer to Israel," *Channel 1 TV* (Moscow), in Russian, 1500 GMT 11 February 1992, in *BBC SWB* SU/1303 A4/1[2] (13 February 1992).

THE PROTECTION OF LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITIES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

In Central Asia, Israel “particularly welcomed warm ties with predominantly Muslim states; and they looked ahead to setting up networks for the day when the region’s two hundred thousand Jews might need to leave in a hurry.”¹⁸² As discussed in the preceding chapter, the Jewish Diaspora has a special significance for the State of Israel, not just culturally and socially, but in terms of national security. As the only guaranteed protector of Jews in the Diaspora, Israel has a special responsibility to care for and provide for Jews living in Central Asia. Although there is no historical legacy of anti-Semitism in Central Asia, unlike other parts of the former Soviet Union, “the fate of the Jewish population in the Caucasus and Central Asia is another source of concern for Israel.”¹⁸³ The deportation of European Soviet Jews to Central Asia under Stalin actually saved many from the horror of the Holocaust, and many Jews were warmly accepted by their Muslim Central Asian neighbors.¹⁸⁴

The large number of Israelis with roots in the Central Asian region underscores this notion and the independence of Central Asia “gave Israel a historic opportunity to communicate with the oldest Jewish communities of Asia, such as the Jews of Bokhara.”¹⁸⁵ Israeli Prime Minister David Levy’s speech to the Knesset on 24 December 1991 recognized the Central Asian republics and “expressed his hope that in return Israel would be able to obtain their cooperation and that they would facilitate Jewish immigration to Israel.”¹⁸⁶ Thus “caring for these Jews and preparing for their return to Israel, is of prime concern to Tel Aviv’s foreign policy.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Pipes, “Event of Our Era,” p. 83.

¹⁸³ Maleki, “Turkish-Israeli Relations,” p. 190.

¹⁸⁴ Timur Agzamovich Alimov (Director, International Cultural Center, Republic of Uzbekistan), interview with the author, 19 October 2004, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

¹⁸⁵ “Iran, Central Asia and Israel,” <http://www.netiran.com> (accessed 6 April 2002).

¹⁸⁶ Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition*, p. 423.

¹⁸⁷ “Iran, Central Asia and Israel,” <http://www.netiran.com> (accessed 6 April 2002).

MASHAV AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

An issue closely tied to diplomacy and economic development has been the large-scale development assistance that the State of Israel has devoted to the Central Asian republics, especially Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Development assistance has been especially sought from Israel for a number of reasons. Among these reasons are the extremely large Soviet and Russian immigrant community present in Israel; the great number of highly trained Soviet immigrants in Israel who possess an unrivaled knowledge of Soviet engineering and who have also retained very valuable *social and cultural* aptitudes; the large number of people in Israel who are proficient in Russian; and the fact that Israel, through its aid agency, offers free Russian language training courses for Central Asians both in the region and in Israel itself.¹⁸⁸ Many of the newly independent states approached Israel for assistance in specific areas in which they perceived Israel to be particularly adept, such as in drip irrigation techniques, water conservation, and soil management.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Center for International Cooperation, known by its Hebrew acronym MASHAV, is the organization responsible for Israeli aid and development projects overseas. In Israel, aid to foreign countries is distributed and administered through the Foreign Ministry. This fact is noteworthy because it indicates clearly how Israel views aid to foreign countries: as a component of foreign policy. While Israel is certainly not the only state to organize itself in this manner, it is very relevant when examining Israeli foreign policy. From Israel's view, development assistance cannot and should not be separated from foreign policy; it is simply yet another method to advance policy goals and initiatives.

¹⁸⁸ For more on the linguistic and cultural aspects, consult Andrey Vasilyevich Fedorchenko, "Kazakhstan-Israel: Ways of Economic Rapprochement," <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001, site discontinued). Also based upon field research conducted in Central Asia and Israel, 2004-2006.

Writing in 1994, Raphael Israeli cited Israel's potential aid programs as one of four areas of appeal to the republics. He wrote that

Israel has tremendous experience and knowledge to share in the fields of water conservation, agricultural technology, and the development of arid areas. Devastated Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, following many years of monoculture, which polluted their land and water, are in much need of Israel's prowess in these domains. So are the poor nations of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, who might adopt some of Israel's technologies.¹⁸⁹

Accordingly, Israel very deliberately made use of the needs of the republics in order to influence their post-Soviet politics.

CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE CIS AND EASTERN EUROPE

On 25 November 1997, MASHAV held a conference on *International Cooperation in the Commonwealth of Independent States and Eastern Europe* at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Member of Knesset and former Minister of Health Dr Ephraim Sneh¹⁹⁰ gave a lecture titled "The Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and their Influence on Israel's Security."¹⁹¹ It is noteworthy that Dr Sneh was responsible for the allocation of \$20 million in state funds for a hospital in Azerbaijan¹⁹² and the financing of an intensive care hospital in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Israeli, "Return to the source," p. 29.

¹⁹⁰ It is also relevant that Sneh served as the Deputy Minister of Defense in the Barak government.

¹⁹¹ Ephraim Sneh, "The Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Their Influence on Israel's Security" (paper presented at MASHAV conference, Jerusalem, 25 November 1997), <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il>.

¹⁹² The construction of the hospital in Azerbaijan did not materialize in large part due to difficulties that arose for the Azeri side; however, Israel remained committed to funding the \$20 million medical facility.

¹⁹³ Sneh, telephone interview.

Speaking to MASHAV trainers, Sneh stated that "MASHAV is advancing two items on Israel's strategic agenda: security and economy. I do not consider development cooperation to be a donation, nor an act of altruism, but rather, an investment of the first rank."¹⁹⁴ Sneh added that Central Asia is now included in what he terms "Israel's hinterland."¹⁹⁵ By this he means those states which affect Israel's security, either directly or indirectly, as a result of the advances in military, ballistic missile, and WMD technologies (see chapter two). Modern missile technology and the proximity of Central Asia to Iran therefore dictates its inclusion in this hinterland. In the estimation of Sneh, foreign aid money is therefore really an investment in Israel's security, and he is not alone in his beliefs.¹⁹⁶

ISRAELI PERCEPTIONS OF CENTRAL ASIA: MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE REGION

While it has become a cliché to write that the fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc were unforeseen in Western capitals, it bears repeating that many nations were unprepared to deal with the end of what had been the prevailing order of the Cold War. It is also important to bear in mind that the republics themselves were unprepared for the challenges of independence.¹⁹⁷ Many Russophiles and Sovietologists were educated, trained, and employed to decipher the inner workings of the Soviet Union; however, their experiences and perceptions tended to focus largely on the Slavic component of Soviet officialdom rather than on the identities of neighboring Soviet Republics. This component of the Soviet Union

¹⁹⁴ Sneh, "Countries of the Commonwealth," <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il>. Sneh, telephone interview.

¹⁹⁵ Sneh, telephone interview.

¹⁹⁶ Based on Sneh's paper and conversations with the author held with Israeli officials in Israel, summer 1999 and November 2005.

¹⁹⁷ Yuldasheva, "Modern Uzbekistan," p. 38.

was primarily—but not exclusively—ethnically Slavic and religiously Orthodox Christian. As such, little was known of the Soviet Union's vast Central Asian landmass, its peoples, cultures, or unique national identities. Throughout the West, Central Asia was an unknown entity. These newly created countries had never existed as independent nation-states and their national identities, such that did exist at the time, were largely artificial constructs, a product of Soviet nationality policies whose origins date to national delimitation in 1924. The outside world had to start from scratch in building relations with the newly independent states of the region; however, with continued Jewish immigration, Israel was able to capitalize on their new knowledge-base.¹⁹⁸

For much of the Soviet period, Central Asia remained virtually closed off. There were few exchanges with Central Asia and relatively few non-Soviets were able to visit the region, much less gain valuable insights through on-the-ground experience. It is important to note that this was not the case just for Western and Israeli visitors but also for travelers from the Muslim world; Soviet paranoia of an Islamic fifth column kept nominally 'Muslim' Central Asia very distant from the Arab and Muslim worlds.

Fresh in the minds of Israel's leaders were several notions that greatly influenced their perception of the new republics of Central Asia. For the purposes of this study, the origins of Israeli perceptions of Central Asia have been broken down into four major factors. These four factors which contributed to the formation of Israel's popular interpretation of Central Asia are: (1) a historical memory of Soviet

¹⁹⁸ Israeli familiarity with Central Asia differed from that of other nations in an essential area; as Soviet Jews increasingly made Aliyah, those originating from Central Asia (including the Bukharan Jews) brought with them living memories and connections to the region. These individuals and families would prove an invaluable connection and resource for the State of Israel as it interacted with the Central Asian republics.

support for the Palestinians and the so-called 'Rejectionist Front' of radical Muslim nations which were opposed to the existence of the State of Israel; (2) the experience of surviving Iraqi ballistic missile attacks during the 1991 Gulf War; (3) the lack of much experience¹⁹⁹ in dealing with Muslim nations; and (4) the fact that Central Asia was an unknown entity to Israel. These four factors, when coupled with the black-and-white terms in which policy is generally created in Israel, underscored the need to engage Central Asia. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, Israeli policy makers have tended to view issues relating to national security *as* questions of national survival, and therefore as a zero-sum game in which the State of Israel either wins or it loses. Because losing in this sense means the destruction of the state, Israel must never lose. The formation of Israel's relationship with Central Asia was no different: the thinking within the Israeli government at the time held that developing positive relations with the new republics was paramount to the survival of the state. Army Chief of Staff and future Prime Minister Ehud Barak said at the time that the "new Muslim republics in Asia don't seem [to be]... something that will add to our health, at least in the long term."²⁰⁰

Historical Memory of Soviet Support for Palestine and the 'Rejectionist Front'

Foremost in the popular conception of Central Asia was the memory of the Soviet Union's support of the Arab and Palestinian cause through both words and deeds.²⁰¹ Throughout the Cold War, the Soviet Union maintained very close relationships with a number of Arab nations that were opposed to the existence of the

¹⁹⁹ Israel's formal experience was limited to dealings with Egypt, Iran, and Turkey. At the time of the fall of the Soviet Union, Israel had limited relations with Turkey, frosty relations with Egypt, no relations with Iran since the Islamic Revolution.

²⁰⁰ Pipes, "The Event of Our Era," p. 48, referring to Israeli television, broadcast 11 September 1991.

²⁰¹ See Freedman, "Israel and Central Asia," pp. 16-20.

State of Israel. Moscow had served as a “spoiler, the supplier of arms to radical Arab countries and the instigator of hostility between Israel and its neighbors.”²⁰² As successor states to the Soviet Union, therefore the republics of Central Asia were to be viewed with much skepticism by Israel.²⁰³ As a result, ensuring that these new republics did not follow in the tradition of the Soviet Union became a prime goal for the government in Israel.

Leading up to and during the 1991 Gulf War, Israel was locked in several confrontations with its Muslim neighbors. The first Intifadah continued to rage in the Occupied Palestinian Territories; Israel was still deeply entrenched in southern Lebanon and had yet to engage in the Madrid peace talks. Most importantly, Iraq’s Saddam Hussein had made repeated threats against the Jewish State, at one point in July 1990 threatening to “burn half of Israel” in a chemical warfare strike.²⁰⁴ The attempted Iraqi strategy to fracture the international coalition by dragging Israel into the conflict certainly played into Israel’s perception of a nation under threat.

Operation Desert Storm: Ballistic Missile Attacks

A second factor that influenced Israel’s perceptions of Central Asia also has its origins in the 1991 Iraq war. During Operation Desert Storm, Israel became one of the nations subjected to ballistic missile attacks. As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, the changing face of modern warfare has increasingly led to the

²⁰² Abba Eban, “Forward,” in Aryeh Levin, *Envoy to Moscow: Memoirs of an Israeli Ambassador, 1988-1992* (London, 1996), p. xv.

²⁰³ In his memoirs, former Israeli Ambassador to Moscow Levin relates an exchange with Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Kolokolov that took place in late March 1992 on the subject of continued arms sales to states hostile to Israel, in particular, a \$2 billion sale to Teheran alone. Kolokolov, responsible for the Middle East at the Foreign Ministry, remained quiet according to Levin. Kolokolov’s wife, however, injected that as long as Russians wanted to live, they would need money. This episode indicates that Israeli concerns were not without basis in fact.

²⁰⁴ Karen Laub, “Israeli Official Says Nation is Set to Use Chemical Arms if Iraq Attacks,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 28 July 1990.

emergence of new security threats. The threat posed by ballistic missiles is just one example that has caused the State of Israel to expand its security and threat perceptions, and to incorporate dangers lurking beyond its immediate borders.²⁰⁵

During the 1991 Gulf War, over a period of six weeks, “thirty-nine—some say forty—Iraqi missiles were fired” at Israel. This was part of an unsuccessful Iraqi strategy to fracture the coalition by drawing Israel into the conflict. Over the course of those six weeks, the noted Israeli military historian Martin van Creveld writes that the total payload of the Iraqi ballistic missile attacks was approximately 10 tons, or “less than the combined payloads of two modern fighter-bombers.” Nonetheless, the psychological impact of the Iraqi attacks was devastating. Very few Israelis died due to the Iraqi missile attacks; far more people sought medical attention after suffering from shock or from self-inflicted injuries. Specifically, one person died as a result of the missile attacks and two more died of injuries sustained in the attacks, yet over 1,000 people sought medical attention. Of these, approximately 250 people were actually injured in the attacks, about 500 people suffered from shock, and the rest had injected themselves with the chemical warfare agent antidote atropine in the false belief that the Iraqi missiles were carrying unconventional CW warheads. A further ten people are believed to have died from either heart attacks or from “suffocation as they failed to unscrew the filter on their gas masks.” Van Creveld notes dryly that “Israel has the dubious distinction of becoming the first country in history to go through a war in which the number of those who had died of fear exceeded those who had been killed by enemy action by a ratio of 10:1.”²⁰⁶

The psychological impact of the threat demonstrated by Iraqi ballistic missiles cannot be overstated. Van Creveld contrasts the Israeli experience in 1991 with that

²⁰⁵ Fiorenza, “Center of Excellence,” p. 46.

²⁰⁶ Martin van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israeli Defense Force* (New York, 2002), pp. 331 and 334.

which took place in English and German cities during the Second World War. He notes that during WWII these cities “regularly absorbed thousands of tons of bombs and suffered tens of thousands of casualties without ceasing to function for longer than was necessary to repair the worst of the damage.” Similarly, during the Israel’s War of Independence, Israelis put on a brave face and were “determined to cope with air attacks and carry on life as usual.” This is in stark contrast to how Israelis coped during the Iraqi Scud attacks when many Israelis fled to other parts of the country.²⁰⁷

The experiences of 1991 greatly affected Israeli perceptions of security. For the first time in Israeli history the state was subjected to a serious threat from far beyond its borders.²⁰⁸ Moreover, Israeli intelligence was unable to “provide the government with hard data on the size and nature of the threat (e.g., how many missiles Saddam possessed and whether he had chemical warheads for them).”²⁰⁹ The lack of credible intelligence about the threat at hand would be rectified in the future. As shall be demonstrated, a significant factor in Israel’s penetration of Central Asia was Israel’s desire to gain intelligence insights into both the threats emanating from Iran and Afghanistan. The IDF and the Israeli intelligence community would not be left blind again.

Many of the security threats that would emerge from the ashes of the Soviet Union—specifically long-range missile technology and weapons of mass destruction—parallel what transpired over those six weeks in early 1991. The Iraqi Scud attacks bore a specific poignancy for a nation and people so deeply affected by the Holocaust; the notion of an Iraqi chemical attack could not be psychologically separated from the horror of industrialized murder in Nazi Germany’s gas chambers.

²⁰⁷ Van Creveld, pp. 331 and 333-334.

²⁰⁸ Gawdat Baghat, “Iraq and Israel,” *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* XXVII, no. 1 (Fall 2003), p. 70.

²⁰⁹ Van Creveld, p. 326.

Allegations (far beyond the scope of this thesis) that West German firms had helped Iraq develop its CW capabilities further reinforced this connection.

Little Experience Dealing with Muslim Nations

A third factor which colored Israel's viewpoint on Central Asia was that at the time Israel did not have much success in dealing with Muslim nations. It is important to note when the Central Asian republics got their independence in December 1991, the State of Israel had secured a peace treaty only with Egypt, the Camp David Accords of 1978.²¹⁰ Israel was still technically in at war with the remainder of the Arab world, dating from the 1948 War of Independence. The peace with Cairo was at best a cold peace—ambassadors had been exchanged and relations normalized—but there was little more. Full relations with Turkey were still several years away from blossoming into their current state. At the time of the Soviet Union's collapse, Turkey was the only other Muslim nation to recognize Israel, a precondition for Turkey's admission to NATO.²¹¹ Likewise, other peace deals were yet to come. The Oslo Accords with the PLO (September 1993) and the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty (26 October 1994) were still approximately two and three years away, respectively.²¹² Lacking many relationships with Muslim nations, Israel was quick to act: "In addition to the usual reasons for seeking good relations, they [the Israelis] particularly welcomed warm ties with predominantly Muslim states."²¹³ This was essential to undercut Israel's so-called 'anti-Muslim' image, as well as the *perception* of Israel abroad as being anti-Muslim. Moreover, this fact should not be overlooked; it is an important consideration because one of Israel's main objectives in establishing

²¹⁰ Menashri, interview.

²¹¹ Based on private conversations with the author, in London and Israel.

²¹² Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence*, p. 143.

²¹³ Pipes, "Event of Our Era," p. 83.

relations with the Central Asian republics was to defuse tensions and decrease international Muslim fervor over the pace of the peace process.

Unknown Entity

The fifth factor in Israel's perception of Central Asia was ignorance. Central Asia was an unknown quantity to many countries in the West, and Israel was no exception. As noted above, even the Iranian government was ignorant vis-à-vis Central Asia.

For instance, the Iranian threat was believed in firmly and rarely—if ever—challenged. Just how Shi'a, Persian-speaking Iran was to make inroads in Sunni, predominantly Turkic-speaking Central Asia—with Tajikistan being the notable exception—was evidently not much examined at the time in Israel, nor in London or Washington for that matter. However, both Israel and Washington had deemed Iran a threat to the security of Central Asia,²¹⁴ and by extension a threat to Israel itself. Were Iran allowed to do as it pleased in the region, Israeli and US national interests would suffer as would the security of the State of Israel.

THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES: POTENTIAL DANGERS

At the time of its independence, Central Asia posed several significant threats to Israeli security. The perception of these threats helped motivate Israeli foreign policy planners to reach out and engage the republics in order to neutralize potential dangers.

These threats focused largely around the likelihood that Iran could possibly come into possession of strategic weapons and technologies left from the Soviet-era.

²¹⁴ Arieh O'Sullivan, "US, Israel conclude strategic dialogue," *The Jerusalem Post*, 6 June 1997.

Primarily this included the existence of nuclear weapons in Kazakhstan, the legacy of the vast numbers of Soviet-vintage special nuclear materials scattered throughout the former Soviet Union; and a fear of a post-Soviet brain drain and the migration of scientific knowledge to Iran and other hostile states. All of these threats are hard security threats and ones which at the time appeared to be the most pressing, both in terms of the sheer numbers involved, but also as a result of the devastating consequences if a worst-case scenario came to pass.

Other threats obviously existed in the region. These included the possible rise of hard-line Islamist regimes, possible negative consequences for the region's Jewish communities, and the development of rear areas in which anti-Israel terrorist organizations could train and seek refuge. Furthermore, Israel was also concerned about the possible emergence of new state sponsors of terrorism or the creation of new petrol-economies aligned against Israel which could have financially subsidized the rejectionist Arab states in their struggle with Israel.

Kazakhstan As a Nuclear State

The Soviet Union's widely dispersed nuclear arsenal ended up being located in four sovereign nations after the fragmentation of the Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet Union saw nuclear warheads and their delivery vehicles located in Belarus, Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and Kazakhstan. Repeated assurances from Moscow that these nuclear weapons remained firmly in the control of the Russian military²¹⁵ unfortunately did little to alleviate justifiable concerns arising from the existence of strategic weapons outside the physical control of Moscow. The Russian

²¹⁵ The Soviet strategic command center with ultimate control over Soviet nuclear arms was located in Moscow and not in Kazakhstan. It is therefore a near impossibility that independent Kazakhstan would be able to launch or transfer Soviet-legacy weapons of mass destruction independently of Moscow. Nikolay Kuzmin, PhD (Kazakh political analyst and former Soviet diplomat and military officer), interview with the author, 24 January 2005, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

military, after all, had many of its own problems to deal with, from locating enough capable young men to serve in the military to providing enough food for its conscripts to eat.

Independent Kazakhstan came into existence in 1991 as a de facto nuclear power due to the presence of over 2,000 Soviet strategic and tactical nuclear weapons located within its territory.²¹⁶ Kazakhstan fully cooperated in the repatriation of Soviet-era nuclear weapons to Russia, as did both Belarus and Ukraine.²¹⁷ At the time it was widely feared that 'Muslim' Kazakhstan would be a natural destination for radical regimes, especially Iran, seeking to acquire an operational nuclear warhead or the components, technology, or expertise to advance its indigenous weapons program. Such an acquisition, it was feared, could happen by sale, sharing, or theft. The Israeli concerns regarding Kazakh nuclear capability "can partly account for Israel's feverish activity in the region and for its intense efforts to establish diplomatic contacts with Kazakhstan."²¹⁸ During the research for this thesis, the former Mossad Director-General confided in the author that in retrospect it can now be said no Kazakh nuclear arms came into Iranian custody.²¹⁹

Such fears have not centered only on Kazakhstan. Similar allegations of Tajikistan selling nuclear technology to Teheran were made on 2 January 1992: "Interested parties from Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and Pakistan, have reportedly visited Dushanbe."²²⁰ The fear of Soviet nuclear weapons falling into the wrong

²¹⁶ Murat Laumulin, "Kazakhstan's Nuclear Policy and the Control of Nuclear Weapons," in *The Nuclear Challenge in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. George Quester (London, 1995), p. 182.

²¹⁷ For more information, see Keith D. Wolfe, "Kazakhstan's Nuclear Policy," *Journal of Central Asian Studies* 1, no. 1, (Fall/Winter 1996) and Laumulin, "Kazakhstan's Nuclear Policy."

²¹⁸ Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition*, p. 437.

²¹⁹ Efraim Halevy (former Mossad Director-General), telephone interview with the author, 10 April 2006, London, United Kingdom.

²²⁰ "Tadjikistan Ostensibly Offering Materials For Nuclear Weapons," Reuters, 2 January 1992, article abstract, NIS Nuclear Trafficking Database (hereafter NIS NTD) <http://www.nti.org/db/nistraff/1992/19920020.htm>. See also Carol R. Saivetz, "Central Asia:

hands nearly became reality in January, 1990: anti-government forces in Baku, Azerbaijan, rose up and attempted to breach the "perimeter of an army base... to steal the nuclear weapons stored there."²²¹ In their book detailing the frightening state of disarray of the former Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal, Andrew and Leslie Cockburn document the panic this episode triggered among US intelligence agencies.²²² The fact that armed rebel forces were purposely targeting Soviet military facilities with the explicit intention of stealing nuclear weapons ushered in a terrifying new era: "A wall had been breached. The Soviet Union was visibly crumbling and now it was apparent that a vast nuclear arsenal could come adrift in the wreckage. The notion sent chills around the world."²²³

Special Nuclear Materials and Soviet-Era Weapons

At the time of Central Asia's independence, the Red Army had been dispersed throughout the territory of the Soviet Union. As a result, vast amounts of weapons, military materiel, and hardware were effectively transferred to the control of the newly independent states. Such materiel ranged from huge amounts of conventional military equipment to the Soviet Union's clandestine chemical and biological research and production facilities located throughout Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and southern Russia.

Of particular concern were the large numbers of special nuclear materials spread throughout the former Soviet Union. These special nuclear materials included a variety of non-weapons grade radioactive isotopes such as cesium-137 and cobalt-

Emerging Relations with the Arab States and Israel," in *Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects*, ed. Hafeez Malik (London, 1994), p. 318, citing *Moscow Radio, Rossi Network*, 9 August 1992, in FBIS-SOV-92 155 (11 August 1992), p. 2

²²¹ Andrew Cockburn and Leslie Cockburn, *One Point Safe: The Terrifying Threat of Russia's Unwanted Nuclear Arsenal*, (London, 1997), p. 9.

²²² For more on this episode, see chapter one, "Black January," Cockburn and Cockburn, *One Point Safe*.

²²³ Cockburn and Cockburn, *One Point Safe*, p. 12.

60 that were used in civilian applications such as medical imaging devices, portable generators, and food processing and agricultural equipment throughout the Soviet Union.²²⁴ The Soviets had done an extremely poor job of properly inventorying their nuclear munitions, especially when it came to these so-called 'orphaned' special nuclear materials. Many were never adequately accounted for and remained 'lost' upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

While special nuclear materials such as cesium-137 and cobalt-60 were unsuitable for use in traditional nuclear weapons, the concern remained that these radioactive substances could be combined with conventional explosives to create a radiological dispersal device, or dirty bomb. Such a weapon would spread radioactive debris and particles, contaminating not just the immediate blast area but possibly the surrounding areas as well, given the proper weather conditions. Many analyses concur that such a weapon would in fact do little physical damage,²²⁵ but the psychological impact could be significant. While not a weapon of mass destruction, a radiological dispersal device would certainly be a weapon of mass *disruption*, and would therefore be a prime weapon for terrorists. The Soviets allegedly conducted some tests of radiological weapons at Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan.²²⁶ There have been rumors that the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein experimented with similar technology, although there is no public evidence to support this claim.

²²⁴ Charles J. Hanley, "How real is threat of terrorists using weapons of mass destruction?" *Austin American-Statesman*, 13 November 2005.

²²⁵ Bill Nichols, Mimi Hall and Peter Eisler, "'Dirty bomb' threatens U.S. with near terror attack," *USA Today*, 11 June 2002.

²²⁶ Kenley Butler, Weapons of Mass Destruction in Central Asia, Center for Nonproliferation Studies Issue Brief, Monterey Institute of International Studies (October 2002), http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_19a.html (accessed 6 April 2006).

The 'Brain Drain' and Scientific Knowledge

The end of the Cold War brought an end to the Soviet Union's vast military-industrial complex. For both US and Israeli national security planners this meant an end to the Soviets' vast program of subsidizing the research and development of WMDs; however, the end of the Cold War did not eliminate the knowledge base gained over years of WMD production. In addition to the disposition of the Soviet Union's nuclear weapons and special nuclear materials, a third danger arose from the large numbers of now unemployed WMD scientists and technicians. This was especially true regarding those working in the Soviet biological warfare field, which was often referred to as the 'poor man's nuclear program.'²²⁷

With the end of subsidies from Moscow, the 70,000 scientists and workers who had once created enormous quantities of unconventional weapons were suddenly unemployed and left with few prospects. It was not long before representatives from states of concern began to visit these scientists with very generous employment offers. In 1998, *The New York Times* reported that "Iran is scouring the former Soviet Union to hire scientists who once worked in laboratories tied to Moscow's vast germ warfare program and has succeeded in recruiting some of them to take jobs in Teheran." The authors added that Iran was offering salaries as large as \$5,000 per month to knowledgeable scientists—scientists who had often made less than that amount in an entire year.²²⁸

²²⁷ For more information about the Soviet biological warfare program, the following three sources are recommended: Ken Alibek, with S. Handelman, *Biohazard: The Chilling True story of the Largest Covert Biological Weapons Program in the World, Told from the Inside by the Man Who Ran It*, (New York, 1999); Jeanne Guillemin, *Anthrax: The Investigation of a Deadly Outbreak*, (London, 1999); and Jeanne Guillemin, *Biological Weapons: From the Invention of State-Sponsored Programs to Contemporary Bioterrorism* [uncorrected proof], (New York, 2005).

²²⁸ Judith Miller with William J. Broad, "Iranians, Bioweapons in Mind, Lure Needy Ex-Soviet Scientists," *The New York Times*, 8 December 1998.

In their report, *The New York Times* noted that at least five former Soviet biological warfare scientists had accepted Iranian offers and had relocated to Iran, and a further undisclosed number had accepted contracts to complete work for the Iranian government's clandestine WMD program while in Russia. Over a dozen more scientists claimed to have been unsuccessfully approached by the Iranian government; two of them claimed to have been "asked specifically to help Tehran make biological weapons." American officials have claimed that the actual number of attempted and failed recruitments by Iranian government representatives is much higher. It is reasonable to conclude that many more scientists may not have admitted to such attempted recruitment and that the actual numbers may in fact be much higher. This sheds some insight on the size of the problem of the post-Soviet brain drain, especially considering the sheer number of scientists who were involved in the Soviet program.²²⁹

Given the size of this problem, it is little wonder that Israeli security officials were concerned about the fate of Soviet scientists. If the Iranian government acquired advanced Soviet unconventional weapons technologies, there was little reason to think that they would not be used to threaten the State of Israel.

THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES: POSSIBLE OPENINGS

The successful application of Israel's foreign policy objectives in Central Asia had the potential to deliver many opportunities and openings for Israel. In addition to the obvious benefits of neutralizing the threats of Iranian penetration and Islamic radicalism, there are three specific opportunities that thus far have not been discussed

²²⁹ Miller with Broad, "Iranians, Bioweapons."

in detail: greater Jewish immigration from former Soviet Central Asia, enhanced commercial relations, and opportunities for increased intelligence collection.

All three of these developments could help bolster Israeli national security. The first opportunity to come from independence and greater Central Asian-Israeli relations came in the form of increased Jewish immigration to Israel. This would not only advance the goal of the 'ingathering of the exiles' but would help bolster Israeli security by countering the evolving demographic shortfall vis-à-vis Israel's Arab neighbors.

Second, greater commercial ties would not only clearly benefit the Israeli economy, but would also provide a means for Israel to expand its presence in the region. Greater economic cooperation benefits national security through several means. Technology transfers and exchanges create opportunities for Israelis to visit the region and vice versa. Through such exchanges, personal relationships are made and connections grow. When the time comes to ask for a favor or assistance, it is always easier to reach out to a friend. Furthermore, positive relationships can aid in preventing the emergence of anti-Semitism—an important point for the region's Jewish communities. Business ties nations together and it has often been said that nations that trade together do not go to war; the benefits of ties with Israel demonstrably far outweigh any gains from not engaging Israel. Finally, interacting in the commercial sector often leads to cooperation in other areas, such as diplomacy and security. Some nations may be willing to start a relationship based on trade, and from there they can deepen. In short, the close ties that can come about through trade with Israel can help solidify Israel's international security.

A third opportunity in Central Asia would be increased opportunities for intelligence collection on several of Israel's greatest concerns: Iran, Afghanistan, and

Pakistan. Because these are neighboring states of the Central Asian republics, the benefits Israeli intelligence could gain by working in the region are significant.

Continued Jewish Immigration

While initially Israel encouraged the immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union, in recent years the state has tempered its original enthusiasm. Soviet Jews have made a considerable impact on Israeli culture and have provided a significant boost to the population. This fact has been trumpeted by some Israeli security advocates who see a larger Jewish Israeli population as vital to Israel's national survival because of the demographic disparity between the Israelis and Palestinians.

In the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, immigration to Israel was attractive to many people seeking a better life. Fraudulent documents identifying the bearer as Jewish facilitated this immigration process for those who would otherwise be ineligible. Criminals fleeing prosecution also fraudulently entered Israel and this influx eventually gave rise to organized crime in Israel. Israel's basic law enshrines the Jewish right-of-return through provisions for any Jew to make Aliyah and claim Israeli citizenship. Furthermore, under Israeli law, no Israeli citizen can be extradited to another country to stand trial. Because of this, Israel has become a natural destination for any fugitive wishing to avoid prosecution. Instances of trafficking in persons and narcotics, especially the smuggling of female sex workers and trade in the drug Ecstasy, have increased with the arrival of the so-called 'Red Mafiya' in Israel.²³⁰

²³⁰ Conversation with a journalist for a major Israeli newspaper who wished to remain anonymous, held in Jerusalem in November 2005.

As of 2006 most of the Jews able and willing to relocate from Central Asia have already done so.²³¹

Commercial and Economic Relations

Israel fared better than any other Middle Eastern nation when it comes to doing business in Central Asia. In this regard, "Israel has been more successful in developing economic ties than have Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other rich Muslim Gulf states,"²³² and, in fact, it is the "Middle Eastern state with the largest number of joint ventures"²³³ in Central Asia. Agricultural and irrigation technology have figured prominently as have telecom technology, fertilizers, machine tools, medical equipment, plastic goods, and agricultural produce.²³⁴

Joint ventures and business investments are a means by which Israel can influence events in Central Asia as well as bolster its own domestic economy. The development of an economic hinterland has long been a goal of Israeli policy makers. Deals with Israeli businesses, especially those done through the government's arms and technology firms, may also be viewed as a form of state subsidy. An example of this can be seen in Israel's state-owned aircraft industries; for years a failing business, it has been kept alive in part through foreign deals with Israel. In short, Israel reckons Central Asia can serve as a large market for its exports with which it can fuel its economy.²³⁵

Private sector commercial relations between Israeli businesses and Central Asia are noteworthy for several reasons. First, the government actively participates in

²³¹ Moreno, interview.

²³² Shafiqul Islam, "Capitalism on the Silk Route?" in *Central Asia and the World: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan*, ed. Michael Mandelbaum (New York, 1994), p. 174.

²³³ Philip Robins, "The Middle East and Central Asia," in *The New Central Asia and its Neighbours*, ed. Peter Ferdinand (London, 1994), p. 72.

²³⁴ "Israeli delegation," http://uzland.info/06_27_98.htm (accessed 8 April 2006).

²³⁵ Yuldasheva, "Modern Uzbekistan," p. 40.

promoting trade and economic cooperation. Second, Israeli policy has been to gain influence in Central Asia in large part through technology transfers and investment, much the same way it has utilized development assistance.

In terms of commercial relations with Central Asia, several Israeli firms have done quite well in the republics. These include the Merhav Group; Netafim, Inc.; Beta Shita; Ben Shanar Associates; Bateman; Gamatronic Electronic Industries, Ltd; RAD Data Communications; Alvarion; Tadiran Electronic Industries; Solan International Communications Service; K.Sh.S. Contact Ltd; Optical Access; and the Eisenberg Group. In terms of revenues, Beta Shita earned \$6 million for a trial irrigation system in Andijon, Uzbekistan,²³⁶ and as of 1998, Israeli firms have done in excess of \$1 billion in projects at the Merkhau refinery.²³⁷ In 1993, Saul Eisenberg was reported to have "lined up deals in Kazakhstan worth a potential \$2 billion."²³⁸ Furthermore, for the republics, Israel is an attractive partner in large part due to its "free trade relationships with the United States and the European Union, as well as with Canada, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Jordan, and Turkey."²³⁹

Generally speaking, there have been several reasons why Israeli firms have done so well in Central Asia. First among these has been the active participation of the Israeli government. Israel has lobbied the governments of the republics on behalf of industry sectors as well as specific firms. Commercial relations have also benefited from the state's decision to extend export credits and insurance to Central Asia. An important second reason for Israel's success has been the perception of Israeli firms in

²³⁶ Colin Barraclough, "Muslim Republics Welcome Israeli Irrigation Expertise," *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 September 1992.

²³⁷ Maleki, "Turkish-Israeli Relations," p. 190, citing a *Turan News Agency* report, 26 October 1998.

²³⁸ "Shaul Eisenberg emerges," p. 3.

²³⁹ Blua, "Israel Emerges," <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

the republics: the reputation of the technology that has made the kibbutzim bloom has preceded itself.

A third factor in Israel's success has been the number of Israelis of Central Asian origin. These individuals not only know local languages such as Uzbek and Tajik/Persian, but they also know the lay of the land. Having grown up and been socialized in Central Asia, they also speak the same *cultural* language, and this has allowed them to return to the region to do business with people they most likely went to school with and possibly even knew as children. This local, firsthand knowledge is unbeatable in a business culture that still remains largely based upon who you are and the art of personal negotiation. The large numbers of Russian-speaking Israelis (the largest Russian-speaking population outside of Russia) have also helped commercial relations, although regional language proficiency has allowed Israelis to in a sense bypass Moscow and go straight to the source.²⁴⁰ Those Israelis that can trace their roots back to Central Asia have for the most part been actively doing business in the republics. A commonly held belief in the new Central Asian republics was that "Jewish immigrants from the Southern Tier were expected to invest in their countries of origin."²⁴¹

These factors are interestingly combined in the person of Natan Sharansky, Minister of Industry and Trade in the Netanyahu government. Although not originally from Central Asia, he has come to be representative of Israel's interests in the region. During his tenure, Sharansky made many visits to the region, and served as the de facto "Netanyahu government coordinator in dealing with Russia."²⁴² It has been observed that Sharansky is linguistically at ease with Central Asian leaders, who

²⁴⁰ For example see Hiro, "Uzbekistan."

²⁴¹ Pipes, "Event of Our Era," p. 83.

²⁴² David Makovsky, "Uzbekistan may buy arms from Israel," *Ha'aretz*, 2 July 1998.

are invariably fluent in Russian.²⁴³ It is also believed that the Ukrainian dissident and native Russian speaker was active in promoting Israeli business in Central Asia due to personal interest.²⁴⁴

Intelligence Collection Opportunities

Relationships with the Central Asian states have proven to be a windfall for Israeli intelligence. Israeli intelligence agencies have operated in the region on the issues relating to the proliferation of WMDs and missile technology and have also tracked the development of international Islamist terrorism. They have also been active in monitoring developments in neighboring Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

During a July 2001 visit to Kazakhstan, Israeli Minister of Infrastructure Avigdor Lieberman (himself a native Russian speaker originally from Moldova) “suggested that Israel and Kazakhstan could engage in information exchanges on combating terrorism,”²⁴⁵ an example of how security cooperation can grow from trade discussions. Similarly, Uzbekistan has approached Israel for intelligence cooperation and assistance in combating Islamist terrorism.²⁴⁶

Since the republics’ independence, “Israel has sought to promote security ties with Central Asian governments.”²⁴⁷ Following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC, “Israel has been supplying the US with an extraordinary amount of behind-the-scenes intelligence assistance and security

²⁴³ Hiro, “Uzbekistan.”

²⁴⁴ Based on conversations the author held in Israel with individuals who wished to remain anonymous, summer 1999.

²⁴⁵ Blua, “Israel Emerges,” <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

²⁴⁶ Yossi Melman, “Panel sets new guidelines on roles of Shin Bet and Mossad,” *Ha’aretz*, 18 October 2000. See also “Israel Asks For Uzbekistan’s Assistance to Fight Terrorism,” *IsraelWire*, 10 September 2000.

²⁴⁷ Blua, “Israel Emerges,” <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

advice”²⁴⁸ on Central Asia, especially on Afghanistan.²⁴⁹ According to *The Jerusalem Post*, Washington sought Israeli intelligence regarding Central Asia because “Israel has a stronger foothold”²⁵⁰ in the region. This intelligence assistance was provided because “Israel has better intelligence and stronger relations with countries such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.”²⁵¹ Uzbekistan has been noted to host a significant Israeli intelligence presence, rumored to be the Mossad’s largest station in the region.²⁵²

With regard to WMD technology, several sources have reported that Israeli operatives have been involved in collecting intelligence on the status of Kazakh nuclear weapons, at times in cooperation with their counterparts from the CIA.²⁵³ Dovetailing with Israeli’s concerns about the fate of Soviet nuclear scientists, Aras notes in a 1998 article that “the Mossad and CIA keep a close eye on the nuclear-energy experts of the Central Asian states.”²⁵⁴

Israel’s human intelligence collection, or HUMINT, has benefited as a result of the presence of “Israeli military and intelligence personnel to serve as support for US operations against Osama bin Laden from the territory of Tajikistan.”²⁵⁵ The reports of Tajik-based operations are not the only ones, however. Analogous reporting has surfaced which has placed Israeli observers and advisors—and even some Israeli human intelligence assets²⁵⁶—in Afghanistan, an allegation which Abdul

²⁴⁸ Janine Zacharia, “Israel supplies US with Central Asia intelligence,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 5 October 2001.

²⁴⁹ “Israel to help Afghanistan,” *JTA Daily News Bulletin*, 17 December 2001, p. 2.

²⁵⁰ Zacharia, “Israel supplies US.”

²⁵¹ Zacharia, “Israel supplies US.”

²⁵² “Russia revives arms sales to Iran after ‘burying’ bargain with U.S.,” *Arms Trade Newswire*, 16 January 2001, <http://www.clw.org/cat/newswire/nw011601.html> (accessed 13 June 2001), quoting from *Mideast Mirror*, 15 January 2001.

²⁵³ Aras, “Post-Cold War Realities,” p. 78.

²⁵⁴ Aras, “Post-Cold War Realities,” p. 78.

²⁵⁵ “Foreign Relations,” <http://www.cacianalyst.org> (accessed 26 May 2000).

²⁵⁶ Kathy Gannon, “Arabs arrested in Afghanistan claim they’re working for United States,” *Associated Press*, n.d., http://www.sabawoon.com/time/arabs_arrested_in_afghanistan.shtm (accessed 13

Rashid Dostum's National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan has controverted.²⁵⁷

Other reports indicate Israeli presence in the disputed region of Indian-controlled Kashmir.²⁵⁸

Because this region continues to be a denied area for Israeli intelligence operatives, much of Israel's intelligence collection with respect to Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan has been in the form of greater signals intelligence (SIGINT) and measurement and signature intelligence (MASINT). SIGINT refers to communications intercepts and/or any other information that can be obtained through electronic intercepts; MASINT refers to the intelligence collected through both qualitative and quantitative analysis of sophisticated technical collection systems. These data have the potential to improve Israel's understanding of the types and designs of the weapons in question as well as to monitor the pace of technological advancement. Both Iran and Pakistan possess threatening missile and nuclear weapons programs; Pakistan became a known nuclear power in 1998, while Iran continues to actively pursue its ambitious WMD and ballistic missile acquisition program. Israeli intelligence agencies and the entire national security establishment are focused on monitoring Iran's progress in developing a nuclear bomb. Reportedly aspects of Israeli intelligence services have established a location "across its [Iran's]

June 2001). See also Kathy Gannon, "Arabs in Afghanistan Claim US Link," *Associated Press*, n.d., <http://www.afgha.com/?af=archive&op=printpage&artid=108> (accessed 2 April 2006).

²⁵⁷ "There is more heavy fighting in N. Afghanistan," reprint of *Voice of America*, broadcast 1544 GMT 15 July 1998, <http://www.angelfire.com/ny/chapandaz/page5.html> (accessed 13 June 2001). This report states that the Northern Alliance deny using Israeli military advisers, referencing an *Agence-France Presse* (n.d.) story which reported the presence of Israeli military advisers.

²⁵⁸ See "Israel trains Indians for conflict with Muslim Kashmir," *The Jerusalem Post*, 15 August 2001; "Israeli national security advisor to visit India next week," *Agence-France Presse*, 6 September 2001; "Govt denies reports of Israeli commandos," *Arab News*, 29 September 2000; "Israeli terrorism experts visit Delhi," *Strategic Affairs*, <http://www.stratmag.com/issueOct-1/page02.htm> (accessed 22 June 2001); "The India-Israel connection," *Strategic Affairs*, <http://www.strategic.com/issue2Sep-1/page01.htm> (accessed 20 January 2003); "India Deploys Israeli Hi-Tech War Equipment in War Preparations," *DEBKAFfile*, 31 December 2001; and "Pakistan Downs Indian Spy Drone Made in Israel," *DEBKAFfile*, 8 June 2002.

northern border”²⁵⁹ (which would place it in either Turkmenistan or Afghanistan) from which to keep an eye on Iran. Curiously, Israeli intelligence officers are located in both of these nations.

* * * * *

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 dramatically altered the geopolitical landscape throughout the world. In Israel, the unfolding events in Central Asia were being watched with particular interest. Israel’s greatest fear at the time was that the new republics would fall under the sway of Iran’s fiery brand of revolutionary Islam and adopt Teheran’s fierce opposition to the very existence of the Jewish State. The twin threats of radical Islam and Iranian influence drove Israel’s policy community to act.

This chapter has sought to examine the ways in which Israel approached Central Asia. By exploring Israel’s foreign policy objectives and concerns in the region, it has been demonstrated that Israeli engaged the Central Asian republics in order to protect and ensure its own national security. Popular misconceptions about the region further facilitated the Israeli view that the emergence of independent Central Asian states were a security challenge. Israeli policy quickly and aptly adapted to identify and neutralize perceived threats and rapidly took advantage of new opportunities.

Building on this foundation, the following chapters will detail in depth Israel’s relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

²⁵⁹ “Israel and Afghanistan” *Foreign Report*, 18 June 1998, <http://www.janes.com>.

CHAPTER FOUR: ISRAEL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH UZBEKISTAN

Israeli policy toward Uzbekistan was propelled by the desire to ensure that Uzbekistan did not align against Israeli interests. Israel had three concerns regarding Uzbekistan: the potential rise of Islamist extremism in Uzbekistan, Tashkent's position on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the fear of that Iran might have an influence in Uzbekistan. The fate of the historic Jewish community in Uzbekistan provided a further motivation for Israeli policy. As the region's most strategic and populous state, Uzbekistan was considered a bellwether for the region. In order to prevent the devolution of Uzbekistan into a nation hostile to its interests, Israel sought to support the regime of President Islam Karimov and thus bolster stability throughout the region. Israel engaged Uzbekistan in diplomatic relations and development assistance, economic and commercial relations, and security cooperation. Primarily through a combination of economic and commercial relations, Israel created a framework of political and diplomatic agreements to bolster the Uzbek state. Israel's policy of constructive engagement with Uzbekistan successfully forestalled the emergence of a government hostile to Israeli interests and laid the foundation for a strong relationship. As a result, governmental cooperation between the two states grew close through a shared sense of danger, which arose mainly from their like-minded perception of threats from militant Islamist extremists and Iranian-backed fundamentalists.

This chapter will demonstrate the scope of Israeli-Uzbek relations through an analysis of the interactions in the areas of diplomatic relations and development assistance, economic and commercial relations, and security cooperation over the course of the first decade of Uzbekistan's independence. Developments in these three areas will be examined in order to determine Israel's motivations. Special attention will then be given to an analysis of Uzbekistan's voting pattern in the United Nations General Assembly on resolutions related to the Middle East that are considered hostile to the State of Israel. This will be used as a metric with which to gauge the success of Israel's policy of constructive engagement.

To facilitate the analysis in this chapter, the Israeli-Uzbek relationship over the course of the first decade of Uzbek independence has been broken down into three periods which correspond to the contours of the relationship. During these three phases the relationship first grew close, then experienced an interlude of several years while Israeli attentions were directed to pressing security matters closer to home, and finally entered a period of sustained re-engagement. In the first phase (1991–1994), Israeli-Uzbek ties began from very limited relations to include diplomatic, commercial, and security interactions. Significant development assistance and commercial contacts took place during this initial period. By the end of this first phase, however, the attentions of Israeli policy makers began to drift towards more pressing concerns.

The next phase of the relationship (1995–1997) was characterized by an absence of important interactions. There were no major Israeli visits to Uzbekistan during this lull, and fewer than five agreements were reached. Commercial relations continued and these provided the continuity in the relationship despite a lack of activity on other fronts. Although there was little diplomatic activity and no security

cooperation in the relationship during this period, it is important to note that the overall relationship did not deteriorate. The foundations of the relationship remained strong, which allowed ties to increase and grow in strength quickly during the third phase of the relationship (1998–2001). This period witnessed a re-invigoration of the friendship, replete with numerous visits and the conclusion of a number of international agreements between the two nations, and trade continued to be steadily. During the third phase, the Israeli-Uzbek relationship truly began to show benefits for Israeli national security.

This chapter concludes with brief sections that examine Uzbekistan's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and an analysis of Uzbekistan's voting behavior in the United Nations General Assembly on resolutions related to the Middle East that are considered hostile to Israel. The development of Tashkent's position on these resolutions is used as a metric to gauge the success of Israel's policy of constructive engagement.

PHASE I, 1991–1994: ACCELERATED ENGAGEMENT

Israeli policy toward Uzbekistan during the first phase of the relationship was primarily concerned with preventing the emergence of a government in Tashkent that would be hostile to Israel and its national interests. Israel also sought to block the perceived rise of Islamist extremism and to frustrate perceived Iranian attempts to interfere in Uzbekistan. On the Arab-Israeli conflict, it was Israel's intention to keep Uzbekistan neutral, at the very least, on the question of Palestine. Achievement of these goals, it was hoped, would create another non-Arab Muslim state friendly to Israel; this would help advance Israel's general policy goals for the region (discussed in chapter three). Israel thus engaged Uzbekistan in diplomatic relations and offered

development assistance, initiated economic and commercial relations, and fostered security cooperation.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Uzbekistan held particular importance for Israeli policy in the region; located at the center of the region, it retained the largest population, possessed the region's holiest Muslim sites, and had a history of religious activism. The consequences for failing to engage Tashkent were significant: if the new Uzbek government was not supported, it was feared that the country could devolve into Islamist chaos. Such a situation would be a detriment in the region, provide an entry for Iranian influence, and be disastrous for the Uzbek Jewish community.

Diplomatic Recognition

Israel first recognized the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan on 25 December 1991.²⁶⁰ Uzbekistan was the first of the newly independent Central Asian republics to officially establish diplomatic relations with the State of Israel, and during 1992 Tashkent and Israel cooperated closely.²⁶¹ At the time, the state-owned Uzbek media commented that this development was event "not only in the interests of Uzbekistan and Israel, but it is of great importance to the countries of Central Asia and also

²⁶⁰ This information is drawn from a limited-circulation official Uzbek government document entitled "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the State of Israel," p. 1. Document was written by the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and translated from the Russian "Информация О Торгово-Экономических Связях Республики Узбекистан С Государством Израиль." Obtained in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, October 2004, and in the collection of the author.

²⁶¹ Henry Hale, "Islam, State-building and Uzbekistan foreign policy," in *The New Geopolitics of Central Asia and Its Borderlands*, eds. Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner (Bloomington, 1994), p. 136.

Table 4.1 Major Visits, 1992–1994

Date	Visitor	Purpose	Location
Feb '92	Ambassador Aryeh Levin	Ceremony to mark relations	Uzbekistan
Aug '92	Deputy Justice Minister Mirze Abdo Salmov	Discussion of increased relations	Israel
Jul '94	Foreign Minister Shimon Peres	Official Visit	Uzbekistan
Sep '94	PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat	Discuss recognition & exchange of ambassadors	Uzbekistan

Sources: FBIS; BBC SWB, Levin (1996); author's research.

Table 4.2 Major Agreements, 1991–1994

Date	Agreement	Focus	Where Signed
25 Dec '91	Israeli recognition of Uzbekistan	Political	Israel
24 Feb '92	Establishment of diplomatic relations	Political	Uzbekistan
1993	Treaty discussions on air transit inter-operability	Economic	NA
1 May '93	Tourism agreement	Economic	Israel
4 Jul '94	Aviation agreement	Economic	Uzbekistan
4 Jul '94	Protocol on consultation between the Foreign Ministries of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the State of Israel	Political	Uzbekistan
4 Jul '94	Agreement on tourism cooperation	Economic	Uzbekistan
4 Jul '94	Protocol on developing & supporting business (protection of investments)	Economic	Uzbekistan

Sources: FBIS; BBC SWB; Israeli Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Industry and Trade, and Finance; Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations; author's research.

Kazakhstan.”²⁶² Table 4.1 details the major visits that took place during the first phase of the relationship.

²⁶² “Israel establishes diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan,” *Uzbek Radio* (Tashkent) in Uzbek, 0300 GMT 24 February 1992, in *British Broadcasting Corporation, Summary of World Broadcasts* (hereafter *BBC SWB*), SU/1314 A4/1[2] (26 February 1992).

Establishment of Diplomatic Relations

Aryeh Levin, Israel's Ambassador to Moscow, was in Tashkent on 24 February 1992 to officially establish diplomatic relations and representation (see table 4.2). Levin met with Karimov and the Uzbek leadership, held talks with Foreign Minister Ubaidallah Abdulrazakov and Tashkent *Hakim* (governor) A. I. Fazylbekov,²⁶³ and oversaw the initial search for a building to house Israel's new legation. In two months, Israel had extended recognition and opened diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan and was in the process of establishing a permanent presence in Tashkent, a pattern that would be repeated in other states.

In Levin's discussions with Abdulrazakov a number of issues were brought up, including economic, scientific, and cultural cooperation between the two nations. Such cooperation was viewed in Tashkent to be advantageous to the fledgling republic.

Levin noted in his memoirs the concerns that both he and his government had over the position of Islam in newly independent Uzbekistan, and the potential threat that political Islam posed to the security of the State of Israel. These concerns, however, did not reflect the facts on the ground. At the time, the Islamic threat was a fiction; neither the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan nor the Afghan Taliban movement in Afghanistan was yet a reality. While in Tashkent in February 1992, Levin discussed these issues with his hosts. According to Levin, one of the primary topics was the question of whether Uzbekistan would replace the Cyrillic script with the Arabic script the Uzbek language had once used. In 1924, the Latin script replaced the Arabic script in the written form of the new official Uzbek language, and in 1940, Uzbek was forced to change to use the Cyrillic script. According to Levin, it

²⁶³ "Israel establishes diplomatic relations," in *BBC SWB*, SU/1314 A4/1[2] (26 February 1992).

was the Israeli government's position that usage of the Arabic script "was seen as a very strong vehicle for Muslim fundamentalism."²⁶⁴ In response to a direct question, Abdulrazakov indicated that the Uzbek government had yet to decide whether the Arabic script would be used to replace Cyrillic.²⁶⁵ The very fact that these topics were discussed during Israel's first major diplomatic conversation with Tashkent illustrated the importance that staunching Islamic fundamentalism held for Israel. This also indicates the Israeli government's poor understanding of the region, as Islamist fundamentalism had yet to be a serious concern, however, it does reflect the fear and concern that partially motivated Israeli actions in this period.

Conversion to the Arabic script, it was feared in Israel, would ease Uzbekistan's return to the Muslim World and would facilitate the spread of extremist, anti-Semitic, and anti-Israeli propaganda. Coupled with the concerns of recent incidences of intercommunal unrest and violence in the Ferghana valley (June 1989),²⁶⁶ Israel's early concerns over the role of Islam in Uzbekistan were exacerbated. While the unrest in Ferghana was not related to Islamist extremism, these events were viewed as what *could* come to pass.

According to an unattributed article in *Israeli foreign affairs*, in September 1992, Uzbek officials who were visiting Israel made it a point to warn of "fundamentalist Islamic efforts to influence policies of the former Soviet republics." This had little reflection to developments on the ground in the region; yet it demonstrates how the Uzbek government was communicating to the Israelis what they believed the Israelis wanted to hear. The Uzbeks were part of a delegation which comprised Azeri and Kazakh officials as well, and the warning was delivered to

²⁶⁴ Aryeh Levin, *Envoy to Moscow: Memoirs of an Israeli Ambassador* (London, 1996), p. 351.

²⁶⁵ Levin, *Envoy to Moscow*, p. 351.

²⁶⁶ Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia's New States: Independence, Foreign Policy, and Regional Security* (Washington, DC, 1997), pp. 42-43.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. This also indicates that through its policy of constructive engagement, Israel was slowly drawing Uzbekistan closer. If this was so, the Israelis were certainly pleased to hear representatives of nominally 'Muslim' nations express concerns over Islamic fundamentalism, concerns which matched Israeli anxieties.²⁶⁷

Visit of Foreign Minister Peres

In early July 1994, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres made an official visit to Uzbekistan.²⁶⁸ Islamist extremism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were the two primary issues discussed during this visit. In meetings with President Islam Karimov, Prime Minister Utkir Sultanov, and Foreign Minister Saidmukhtar Saidkasymov, Peres told his hosts that Israeli-Uzbek cooperation was very advantageous for both parties and relayed his government's desire to establish strong diplomatic, political, economic, and cultural ties.²⁶⁹ Peres discussed a number of other issues in his official meetings, including proposals to expand and increase bilateral cooperation, and Uzbek efforts to transform the economy and implement democratic and legal reforms.²⁷⁰ Peres also met with leaders of the local Jewish community in Uzbekistan.

According to Israeli sources, the first and main topic of Peres' discussions in Tashkent was Islamist extremism. Peres stated his belief that Uzbekistan and Israel

²⁶⁷ "Israel said to be covertly arming Azerbaijan," *Israeli foreign affairs* VIII, no. 9 (4 November 1992): p. 5.

²⁶⁸ Glenn Eldon Curtis, ed., *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan: country studies* (Washington, DC, 1997), p. 457. See also "Shimon Peres in Tashkent and Ashgabat," *labyrinth: Central Asia Quarterly* (autumn 1994): p. 13.

²⁶⁹ "Peres Visits Tashkent, Samarkand," *Tashkent Radio Network* in Uzbek, 1100 GMT 4 July 1994, in FBIS-CE-94 (5 July 1994), p. 57.

²⁷⁰ "Agreements signed with Foreign Ministry," *Tashkent Radio Network* in Uzbek, 1330 GMT 4 July 1994, in FBIS-CE-94 (5 July 1994), p. 57.

share in a joint battle against radical Islam.²⁷¹ Karimov agreed, and spoke out against Iranian-backed extremism: he told Peres that "Israel and Uzbekistan were united by the need to combat Islamic fundamentalism"²⁷² originating from Iran. Peres further stated, "Like Uzbekistan, Israel is fighting fundamentalism, poverty, and war and I am sure we shall win this war... Fundamentalism in my judgment is a danger to [Uzbek] lives even more than to Israel. It is a movement of repression, of extremism, of backwardness, and it may hold up the progress of Arab life."²⁷³ Besides stressing the dangers to non-Arab Uzbekistan, Peres also emphasized the impact of fundamentalism on the Arab world in order to point out the threat that Middle Eastern transnational Islamist extremism posed to Uzbekistan and Central Asia.

The second major topic of Peres' discussions was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He sounded out the Uzbek government's position regarding Palestinian autonomy²⁷⁴ and succeeded in securing public Uzbek statements regarding the neutrality on the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Karimov told Peres that conflict with the Palestinians can "only be resolved by means of peace talks and active political considerations."²⁷⁵ The Uzbek government also expressed its support for the peace process, according to open sources, and Foreign Minister Saidkasymov informed Peres that Tashkent thought Israel was making positive steps towards peace.²⁷⁶

²⁷¹ "Peres Notes Joint Interests," *Qol Yisra'el* (Jerusalem) in Hebrew, 1200 GMT 3 July 1994, in FBIS-CE-94 (5 July 1994), p. 57.

²⁷² "Shimon Peres in Tashkent and Ashghabat," *labyrinth: Central Asia Quarterly* (autumn 1994): p. 13.

²⁷³ "Israeli Foreign Minister Arrives For Official Visit," *Itar-TASS* in English, 1405 GMT 3 July 1994, in FBIS-CE-94 (5 July 1994), pp. 56-57.

²⁷⁴ "Uzbeks want to make their peace with America through Israel," *Izvestiya* (Moscow) in Russian, 5 July 1994, p. 3, in FBIS-CE-94 (5 July 1994), p. 57.

²⁷⁵ Victor Niyazmatov, "Roundup on Israeli Foreign Minister's Visit," *Itar-TASS* in English, 2004 GMT 4 July 1994, in FBIS-CE-94 (5 July 1994), p. 57.

²⁷⁶ "Agreements signed with Foreign Ministry," in FBIS-CE-94 (5 July 1994), p. 57.

According to the Russian newspaper *Izvestiya*, during Peres' visit to Tashkent, the Israeli government was asked to "intercede with the Americans to improve strained US-Uzbek relations."²⁷⁷ This referred to a minor incident regarding the harassment by the Uzbek government of an Uzbek national employed by the American embassy. Peres agreed to explore possible ways for Israel to mediate between Uzbekistan and the United States, making much more of this incident than was actually the case, however, it stands as the first time in which Israel offered to use its relationship with the United States to advance relations vis-à-vis Uzbekistan. Israel's offer to serve as an interlocutor with Washington demonstrates that the Uzbeks had come to appreciate the benefits of ties with Israel, and it also attests to the successes of Israeli policy in cultivating the relationship. Israel benefited not only in giving assistance to Uzbekistan in their relationship with the United States, but also in reinforcing to the American government that Israel was a useful and beneficial ally to have in dealing with the Muslim republics of former Soviet Central Asia.

Because of both the reception Peres received in Uzbekistan as well as the unity in Israeli and Uzbek positions on the threat of Islamist extremism, Uzbek-Iranian ties suffered. In July 1994, both *Teheran Radio* and the *Tehran Times*²⁷⁸ were highly critical of Peres' visit to Tashkent. As the *Central Asia Monitor* reported,

Remarkably, the criticism focused as much on Uzbekistan's leadership as on Peres; the *Tehran Times* said that Uzbek President Islam Karimov had been reinforcing dictatorial rule through a 'brutal repression of democratic and Islamic forces.' The Iranian comments apparently mark a rapid deterioration of relations between the two countries, which had seemed close to a rapprochement when Iranian president Ali Akbar Rafsanjani visited Tashkent in October 1993.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ "Shimon Peres in Tashkent and Ashgabat," p. 13, citing *Izvestiya*, n.d.

²⁷⁸ As an English language publication, the *Tehran Times* is not intended for mass domestic consumption. Its opinions are more directed to readers abroad.

²⁷⁹ *Central Asia Monitor*, no. 4, (1994): p. 3.

As one commentator noted, stalling any progress Iran may have achieved in its relationship with Uzbekistan was an advancement of Israel's policy of constructive engagement. Peres' visit advanced Israel's agenda in Uzbekistan, but it also appears to have set back Iran's efforts to establish good relations. It is interesting to note that according to Iranian government sources, Teheran's ire was directed as much toward Uzbekistan as Israel. This is important because it indicates Iran's perception and recognition of the fact that Uzbekistan was not just reacting to Israel's advances, but that Tashkent was actively seeking closer ties with Israel at the expense of Teheran. Iran's displeasure at the Uzbek government only served to reinforce the perception that the Iranians were seeking to further the Iranian-Uzbek relationship to the benefit of Teheran, not Tashkent. Conversely, Israel's overtures to Uzbekistan not only meet Uzbek needs, but reinforced the prevailing perception in Israel that Iran was an unwelcomed actor. The Iranian reaction to Peres' visit was one of the greatest indicators during the first phase of the Israeli-Uzbek relationship that Israel was succeeding in its aims to prevent Iran from gaining influence in Central Asia. Through Peres' visit, Israel was able both to identify Islamist extremism as a common enemy and to secure Uzbekistan's position on the peace process.

A number of agreements were signed on investment protection, air transport, and tourism cooperation, and a protocol establishing and normalizing consultations between Israel and Uzbekistan was signed as well.²⁸⁰ Methods for boosting trade were also the subject of substantial talks between Peres and Sultanov.²⁸¹ Peres expressed Israel's thanks to Karimov personally and the Uzbek government generally for Uzbekistan's attitude towards the local Jewish community²⁸² and for the

²⁸⁰ "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 1. See also "Agreements signed with Foreign Ministry," in FBIS-CE-94 (5 July 1994), p. 57.

²⁸¹ Niyazmatov, "Roundup," in FBIS-CE-94 (5 July 1994), p. 57.

²⁸² "Peres Notes Joint Interests," in FBIS-CE-94 (5 July 1994), p. 57.

compassion extended to Soviet Jewish evacuees during World War II.²⁸³ At the end of the visit, both parties agreed to work toward further visits at the presidential and prime ministerial level.

Yasir Arafat's 1994 Visit to Tashkent

In September 1994, PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat made a working visit to Tashkent. While in Uzbekistan, Arafat held meetings with President Karimov, Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov, and acting *Oily Majlis* Chairman Erkin Khalilov; he also met with Foreign Ministry officials and *Majlis* deputies. At the time of this visit, Uzbekistan and the Palestinians did not have embassy-level diplomatic relations. During his visit Arafat emphasized the "ancient links" between Palestinians and Uzbeks. Over the course of his two-day visit, Arafat discussed with his hosts a number of issues, including the situations in the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. However, no documents (agreements or protocols) were signed. On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Karimov stated that he welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles (13 September 1993).²⁸⁴

President Karimov commented during Arafat's visit that "[w]e see Uzbek-Palestinian relations as an inalienable part of our cooperation with the Arab world."²⁸⁵ Karimov's statement is indicative of the Uzbek's positive approach to foreign overtures during this period, and it is important to note that Karimov had no prior foreign policy experience. It also provided an important insight because it explained how Tashkent approached relations with the Palestinians, as well as how Uzbekistan

²⁸³ "Agreements signed with Foreign Ministry," in FBIS-CE-94 (5 July 1994), p. 57.

²⁸⁴ "Arafat Comments on 'Solid' Links to Uzbekistan," *Interfax* (Moscow) in English, 1918 GMT 14 September 1994, in FBIS-CE-94 (15 September 1994), p. 54. see also "Arafat Arrives In Tashkent; Meets With Karimov," *Ostankino Television First Channel Network* (Moscow) in Russian, 1050 GMT 15 September 1994, in FBIS-CE-94 (16 September 1994), pp. 67-68.

²⁸⁵ "Arafat Arrives In Tashkent," in FBIS-CE-94 (16 September 1994), pp. 67-68.

engaged the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The fact that Uzbek interaction with the Palestinians was viewed through the lens of cooperation with the Arab world and not the relationship with Israel allowed Uzbekistan's relationship with Israel to evolve unencumbered. For Karimov, Uzbekistan's relationship with the Palestinians was a component of Tashkent's emerging foreign policy toward the Arab world. The Uzbeks did not seek to maintain parity in their dealings with both the Israelis and Palestinians; on the contrary, Tashkent's relationship with Israel was much more substantive and nuanced than its relationship with the Palestinians. Karimov was careful in maintaining Uzbek neutrality on the question of Palestine; however, this was not done at the expense of close ties with Israel. Moreover, that Arafat made his first visit as PLO Chairman to Uzbekistan three years after Uzbek independence reflects the relative unimportance of Uzbek-Palestinian relations.²⁸⁶ It is important to bear in mind that at the time, there was no Uzbek sense of parity in relations with Israel and the Palestinians.

Development Assistance As Diplomacy

As an extension of both diplomacy and commerce, development assistance is a critical component of foreign policy. Uzbekistan, a newly independent nation dealing with its legacy of Soviet-era social and environmental problems, had a great need for assistance as it was confronted with the realities of self-governance; this was especially true in the immediate aftermath of independence (1991-1992). Faced with the end of subsidies from Moscow and a crippling economic situation, much needed development assistance served to help steady Uzbekistan in the post-independence period. Assistance helped alleviate some of the hardships that followed the

²⁸⁶ Arafat had previously traveled to Tashkent as a representative of the Arab states and not as a Palestinian official; see "Arafat Arrives In Tashkent," in FBIS-CE-94 (16 September 1994), pp. 67-68.

termination of subsidized social services, guaranteed employment, and massive ecological damage. Israel had the hope that this would have the effect of buoying the Uzbek leadership through uncertain times. Israeli development assistance given to Uzbekistan served political and diplomatic ends, rather than economic and commercial ones. With Israeli national security concerns in mind, policy makers in Israel hoped that development assistance would forestall the emergence of a hostile regime in Tashkent and would lessen the likelihood that the region's most populous state would succumb to Iranian overtures. Israel's assistance programs were helpful to some extent during this period, as were those of the Europeans and the Japanese.

Israeli development assistance to Uzbekistan was sizable in the first phase of their relationship, especially in the area of agricultural productivity. Other areas in which Israeli offered aid included public health programs, medical training and education, and land management. Israel was well known for its experts and expertise in all of these fields. Small numbers of Uzbeks went to Israel to participate in education and training opportunities; in Tashkent, MASHAV specialists created an Agricultural Consulting Center because of the large amount of Israeli foreign aid work in Uzbekistan.²⁸⁷ The American Joint Distribution Center has also been particularly active in Uzbekistan, providing everything from subsistence foodstuffs to building a school, computer education center, yeshiva, and adult community center.²⁸⁸

During the first phase of the Israeli-Uzbek relationship, Israel sought to promote its expertise in the areas of agriculture, development, public health, and

²⁸⁷ "US-Israeli Cooperation in Central Asia" USAID's Partnership with Israel's MASHAV," http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/car/briefers/machav/html (accessed 4 December 2004). Also "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 5.

²⁸⁸ Hershel Shanks, "Tashkent Diary: 'Am I My Brother's Keeper?'" *Moment* (Washington, DC) 23, no. 5, October 1998, pp. 46-49.

environmental protection.²⁸⁹ Most attention was devoted to improving agricultural productivity and the yields of Uzbekistan's main crop, cotton, and many of MASHAV's programs focused on demonstrating how Israeli expertise could help "transform collective command economy farms into farm enterprises that can compete on the emerging freer market."²⁹⁰

ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONS

During the first phase examined in this chapter, the development of economic and commercial ties was an essential component of the relationship. Israeli policy sought to promote trade and investment and the Israeli government consistently worked to help Israeli businesses in the Uzbek market.²⁹¹ Such investment was a combination of government subsidies and private sector funds. This served to stabilize the Uzbek government, which in turn created an environment conducive to the advancement of other Israeli policy objectives.

Tashkent was eager to capitalize on Israeli expertise in agricultural and water usage in arid environments. In the first phase of the Israeli-Uzbek relationship, Israeli firms were thus most active in the agricultural sector. Because Uzbekistan's economy was heavily dependent on agriculture, Israeli technologies were immediately implemented in the areas of drip irrigation and improving agricultural yields. Another area of commercial cooperation between Israel and Uzbekistan involved soil conservation technologies. These areas formed the majority of Uzbekistan's interests

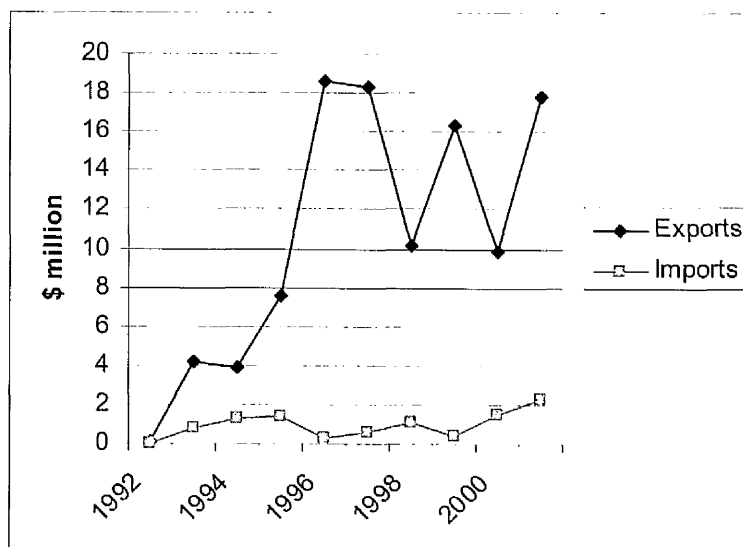
²⁸⁹ Michael Parks, "Foreign Aid: Israelis Back in Business Lending a Hand Abroad," *The Los Angeles Times*, 27 April 1993.

²⁹⁰ Simon Griver, "Projected Partnerships (an interview with Dan Ben-Eliezer, Director of the Projects Division of MASHAV)," *Shalom Magazine*, no. 1, 1997, p. 3.

²⁹¹ "Israeli Insurance For Trade Risks in Uzbekistan," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 9 September 1999.

in doing business with Israel,²⁹² as well as the bulk of business ventures that took place during this phase.

Chart 4.1 Israeli-Uzbek Trade, 1992–2001



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel).

The Pace of Commercial Relations

After Uzbek independence, Israeli firms increased their involvement in Uzbekistan. Despite these obstacles, Israel worked to establish commercial relations and to open the Uzbek economy to Israeli imports.²⁹³ In this regard, Israel successfully expanded its economic relations (see chart 4.1).

At the end of 1992, there were officially 25 Israeli-Uzbek joint ventures.²⁹⁴ This, the first year for which there are figures, Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics recorded data only from May onwards. Before May 1992, imports and exports with the Newly Independent States (NIS) were aggregated under the single heading of "Former Soviet Union." A very modest amount was recorded in 1992: there were no imports from Uzbekistan and only \$0.1 million worth of exports were recorded.

²⁹² Hale, "Islam, State-building and Uzbekistan," p. 163.

²⁹³ Blua, "Israel Emerges," <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

²⁹⁴ Israeli-Uzbek trade statistics, <http://uzbekistan.virtualave.net/Israel.htm> (accessed 22 June 2001).

However, in 1993, Israel imported \$0.8 million and exported \$4.2 million worth of goods. Total trade turnover for 1994, the last year of this phase, rose to \$5.2 million, with imports and exports of \$3.9 million and \$1.3 million respectively (see table 4.3).²⁹⁵

Table 4.3 Israeli-Uzbek Trade, 1992–1994
(in Millions of Dollars)

	1992	1993	1994
Exports	\$0.1	\$4.2	\$3.9
Imports	\$0.0	\$0.8	\$1.3

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel).

Major Commercial Investment, 1992–1994

Israeli commercial activity in Uzbekistan during the first phase of the relationship occurred in three main areas: irrigation and agricultural; animal husbandry; and aviation interoperability and tourism promotion. The majority of Israeli private sector activity during this period involved the export and installation of drip irrigation technologies. Discussion of some of the more important agricultural projects that took place from 1992 through 1994 follows below table 4.4, many for which we don't have details as more was promised than was delivered. Israeli sources have made much of the Israeli government's commercial cooperation with Uzbekistan during this period; however, there exists no external proof to substantiate these claims, leading to some questions of follow though. What is known is that there was substantial interest and overtures involving a number of promises. Numerous reports detail alleged progress on the ground, yet in the final analysis, it seems these fell short.

²⁹⁵ *Foreign Trade Statistics Monthly*, Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel), http://www1.cbs.gov.il/fr_trade/fmenu_e_v1_new.htm.

Table 4.4 Major Israeli Projects, 1991–1994

Year	Project	Sector	Business(es) Involved	Contract size (where known)
Early 1990s	Drip irrigation--before and after independence	Agricultural	Eisenberg Group	NA
Early 1990s	Cattle farming and animal husbandry	Agricultural	<i>not known</i>	NA
1992	Drip irrigation	Agricultural	Beta Shita	\$6m
1992	Drip irrigation at Malek state farm in Syr Darya province	Agricultural	Netafim	NA
1992	Sale of sprinklers	Agricultural	Netafim	NA
1992	Drip irrigation	Agricultural	Zera'im Gedera	NA
1994	Dairy farming	Agricultural	Einav	NA

Source: BBC SWB; author's research.

Israel's export of irrigation technology to Uzbekistan originally formed the majority of their commercial relationship.²⁹⁶ In 1992 Sadik Safaev, first deputy at the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, told the *Christian Science Monitor* that Uzbekistan "welcomes activity from Israeli firms" and added that four Israeli drip irrigation businesses were at that point investing in the new republic.²⁹⁷ The Beta Shita company signed an \$6 million agreement in September 1992 to install an advanced irrigation system in Andijon in eastern Uzbekistan.²⁹⁸ This was a major contract because it involved some of the most fertile and agriculturally productive regions not just in Uzbekistan but in all of Central Asia. Netafim was also active during the first phase of the relationship. It was involved in the sale of sprinkler systems to the Organization for Maintenance of Agricultural Equipment²⁹⁹ and the installation of irrigation systems in a number of locations³⁰⁰ including the Malek state

²⁹⁶ Bülent Aras, *The New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position* (London, 2002), p. 61.

²⁹⁷ Colin Barraclough, "Muslim Republics Welcome Israeli Irrigation Expertise," *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 September 1992.

²⁹⁸ Aras, *New Geopolitics of Eurasia*, p. 61. See also Barraclough, "Muslim Republics."

²⁹⁹ "Sprinklers catch on," *labyrinth: Central Asia Quarterly* (winter 1995): pp. 30-31.

³⁰⁰ Barraclough, "Muslim Republics."

farm in Syr Darya province.³⁰¹ Netafim was also involved in a joint irrigation project on a 300-hectare site using technology produced by Israel's Zera'im Gedera firm.³⁰²

Israeli firms were very active in the export of agricultural expertise, especially concerning cotton production.³⁰³ Israeli technology greatly improved the productivity of Uzbek cotton farming enterprises, and cotton products accounted for nearly ten percent of total Uzbek exports to Israel.³⁰⁴ Uzbekistan's irrigation system traditionally suffered from massive loss of large volumes of precious water en route to the cotton fields:³⁰⁵ many irrigation channels were unlined (which caused water loss because of seepage), exposed to the sun (increasing evaporation), and frequently in a state of serious disrepair.³⁰⁶ Furthermore, chronic over-irrigation in such an arid environment destroyed the water table in many portions of the country and led to the salinization of the topsoil.³⁰⁷ Since cotton is one of the most intensive water consuming agricultural products, Israel technology to maximize water usage was of great interest to Uzbek farmers; Netafim's sprinklers cut water consumption rates in cotton production by over 50 percent.³⁰⁸

Another investor in the agricultural sector was Israeli entrepreneur Saul Eisenberg, and his investments and enterprises in Uzbekistan reportedly boosted agricultural productivity and cut irrigation rates.³⁰⁹ Eisenberg's drip irrigation program increased "cotton production by 40 percent while reducing water usage by

³⁰¹ "Sprinklers catch on," pp. 30-31.

³⁰² "Uzbekistan & Israel," *Vesti*, 1 September 1999.

³⁰³ Aras, *New Geopolitics of Eurasia*, p. 61.

³⁰⁴ "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 3.

³⁰⁵ Barraclough, "Muslim Republics."

³⁰⁶ Based upon firsthand information gained during the author's fieldwork in Uzbekistan in 2004, 2005, and 2006.

³⁰⁷ Based upon firsthand information gained during the author's fieldwork in Uzbekistan in 2004 and 2006.

³⁰⁸ "Sprinklers catch on," pp. 30-31.

³⁰⁹ "Israel: entrepreneur seeks cooperation," in *BBC SWB*, SU/W0213 A/3[13] (17 January 1992).

two-thirds and fertilizer and pesticide use by 10-20 percent.”³¹⁰ Curiously, Eisenberg’s agricultural investment projects began before Uzbekistan gained its independence.³¹¹ Perhaps because of this, and because of Eisenberg’s close ties to the Israeli government, Israeli foreign policy objectives in Uzbekistan were advanced more easily than they otherwise might have been.³¹² Some reports have alleged that Eisenberg’s business activities not only overlap with Israeli government objectives, but that Eisenberg has utilized his commercial dealings to provide cover for Israeli intelligence collection operations.³¹³

Israel was also active in successful commercial animal husbandry enterprises in Uzbekistan during this phase of the relationship. Through the participation and technological investment of Israeli firms, Uzbek cattle yields increased and the amount of consumable beef was doubled.³¹⁴ This was accomplished by greater efficiency and not through greater investments in land or livestock. Israeli businesses were also active in establishing dairy farms in Uzbekistan.³¹⁵ Einav supplied 800 Holstein³¹⁶ dairy cows to the Lenin Mining and Metal Combine in Almalyk, and worked to establish a second dairy farm in Karshi.³¹⁷

The final major area of Israeli commercial activity during the first period concerned the creation of direct international air connections to and from Israel, and

³¹⁰ Freedman, “Israel and Central Asia,” p. 18, citing Abraham Rabinovich, *The Jerusalem Post*, 21 August 1992.

³¹¹ “Israeli-USSR Ties Flourish, Immigrants Languish,” *Israeli foreign affairs* VII, no. 5 (22 May 1991): p. 3.

³¹² For example, Eisenberg’s businesses contributed to the ‘opening up China’ for Israel. For more, consult “Shaul Eisenberg emerges from the shadows,” *Israeli foreign affairs* IX, no. 2 (26 February 1992): p. 3.

³¹³ “Kazakhstan deal,” *Israeli foreign affairs* VIII, no. 10-11 (31 December 1992): p. 8. This article cites the early 1992 ‘familiarization tour’ former Mossad Deputy Director General David Kimche made throughout the Central Asian republics. See also “Israel covertly arming Azerbaijan,” p. 2.

³¹⁴ Khusnudinov, interview.

³¹⁵ Jonathan Hadar (Desk Officer responsible for the Central Asian republics at the Ministry of Industry and Trade), telephone interview with the author, 30 June 1999, Jerusalem.

³¹⁶ Israeli Holstein cows have been specially bred to thrive in hot, arid climates. Judy Siegel-Itzkovich, “MASHAV: Help to Emerging Nations,” n.p., n.d., document in the collection of the author.

³¹⁷ “Israeli know-how,” *labyrinth: Central Asia Quarterly* (summer 1994): p. 35.

Uzbekistan was unique among the Central Asian republics in this regard. Flights—commercial as well as charter—existed between Israel and Central Asia, especially Uzbekistan, during the first two phases of the relationship.³¹⁸ In June 1991—prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and Uzbekistan—there existed an air route from Tashkent to Israel, although it is not clear often this operated.³¹⁹ In 1993 the Uzbek national airline signed an interoperability agreement with Israel,³²⁰ and during Foreign Minister Peres' 1994 official visit an aviation agreement was signed.³²¹ This, coupled with two tourism agreements (1993³²² and 1994), laid the groundwork for future cooperation.

There were several reasons for establishing a direct Tel Aviv–Tashkent route. Tashkent is the largest city in Central Asia, and the airport servicing Tashkent served “as a major air link for other former republics of the Soviet Union with South Asia and Southeast Asia, as well as a major hub linking Central Asia with Western Europe and the United States.”³²³ The attractiveness of Tashkent may also have been highlighted as a gateway to other destinations such as India and Malaysia. El Al's decision to make Tashkent a regional destination in part comes from the size of the Uzbek Jewish community and the large community in Israel with ancestry from and ties to Uzbekistan, especially those who identify themselves as Bukharan Jews. Many in this community are interested in visiting the “graves of their fathers” in Uzbekistan.³²⁴

³¹⁸ During fieldwork in Israel during the summer of 1999 the author observed a large number of travel agents advertising very inexpensive and frequent flights from Tel Aviv to Tashkent. Many were located along Ben Yehuda Street in Tel Aviv.

³¹⁹ Daniel Romanowski, “Jewish History of Uzbekistan,” n.p. n.d, <http://www.heritagefilms.com/UZBEKISTAN.html> (accessed 17 November 2001).

³²⁰ Curtis, ed., *Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan*, p. 443.

³²¹ “Information on Commercial-Economic Relations,” p. 1.

³²² “Tourist pacts,” *Israeli foreign affairs* no. 5 (25 June 1993): p. 2.

³²³ Curtis, ed., *Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan*, p. 442.

³²⁴ Khusnidinov, interview.

Another justification for making Tashkent a regular destination arises from the fact that El Al serves a vital national security function. Although it is a commercial national carrier, El Al operates as one of the primary means for the State of Israel to move large numbers of military personnel and materiel beyond Israel's borders. The Israel Air Force does not possess enough military transport aircraft to perform these tasks, including evacuation. Israel's national security planning includes the requirement that El Al airplanes and resources always need be available for use in the event that Jews in the Diaspora must be suddenly evacuated to safety in Israel. Moreover, the use of El Al aircraft instead of Israel Air Force transport planes facilitates greater international cooperation: it is far less controversial for many nations to cooperate with Israel commercial airplanes, and it gives plausible deniability. It also enables the Israeli government to avoid public scrutiny of some of its activities and maintain vital operational security, an attribute widely perceived by the policy planning community in Israel as bolstering the success of activities the Israeli government would prefer not to publicize. The Israeli government, the military, and the national security services all work to keep very close tabs on the location and disposition of all El Al aircraft so that in the event of a national emergency, those planes can be 'deputized' and pressed into national service in defense of the state and in advancement of its national interests.³²⁵

The existence of direct Israel-Uzbek routes demonstrates the closeness of ties between Israel and Tashkent. The Tel Aviv-Tashkent route is one of Israel's more 'esoteric' air routes. El Al has historically run at a loss, and the Tashkent route is not a large revenue earner. Thus, as with other El Al routes that offer significantly competitive pricing, the Tel Aviv-Tashkent route also operates in the advancement of

³²⁵ Based on discussions with an Israeli intelligence officer and conversations with an El Al security officer, London and Tel Aviv.

Israeli government policy goals: financial gain is far from being the justification for continued Tel Aviv–Tashkent flights.

SECURITY COOPERATION: ANECDOTES, PERCEPTIONS, AND REALITIES

Of all of the areas in which a relationship with Israel would be beneficial, perhaps military and security cooperation would be the best. Israel has both earned *and cultivated* a powerful reputation as a small but strong and secure state. It is known the world over as a state that has proven its capability to defend itself at home and abroad, often against overwhelming odds. Given its reputation in military-security matters, Israel would be a natural partner for the Uzbek government. When the *perceptions* of the Israeli state to exert its will through the use of force—both overtly *and by covert means*—is held to be among the world's best, it logical that friendly states would seek cooperation in this area. A further reason for Israel's security relationship was because of the local Jewish community in Uzbekistan: Jewish and Israeli history has proven that the security of the Jewish people can only be responsibility of the State of Israel. With the fall of the Soviet Union, Israel began to create networks that would facilitate the evacuation of Uzbekistan's Jewish community in the event that local conditions became inhospitable.³²⁶ In short, Israeli believed that such cooperation was in their strategic interests.

When it comes to military and security cooperation, it is extremely difficult to collect precise and accurate data on arrangements and agreements that both the Israeli and Uzbek governments would prefer not to discuss. This is further complicated by the reluctance of many sources in Israel and Uzbekistan to comment for attribution or to share relevant documents.

³²⁶ Daniel Pipes, "The Event of Our Era: Former Soviet Muslim Republics Change the Middle East," in *Central Asia and the World: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan*, ed. Michael Mandelbaum (New York, 1994), p. 83.

Nonetheless, it would be remiss not to include some mention of the *allegations* of security and intelligence cooperation said to exist between the two states. The allegations are noteworthy because they entail the presumption that Israel and Tashkent operate in tandem. The strongly secular Uzbek government, which perceives itself to be locked in a critical struggle with Islamist terrorists, has often been accused of waging a war against Islam itself—similarly, Israel has often been accused of perceiving all Muslim neighbors as enemies. The implicit presumption is that Uzbekistan must naturally receive help and training from the Israelis since this would serve some Manichean goal to destroy strong, organized Muslim political power. While it should go without saying that this is not the case, and that it is far from true that Israel and Uzbekistan operate jointly in this manner, there is some security and intelligence cooperation between the Israelis and the Uzbeks on matters of mutual concern. In the aftermath of Uzbek independence, Israel believed it would be a prudent strategy to build relationships with the military and various security apparatuses, partially because of the uncertainty in the immediate post-Soviet era and partially because cooperation in these areas would be required in the event that the Uzbek Jewish community had to be evacuated. Agencies of the Israeli government have also been involved in the training of Uzbek security services, especially the elite military units responsible for the protection of President Karimov.³²⁷ It is important to stress that there is no publicly available information to support this claim; however, the frequency with which these claims are repeated—both in Uzbekistan and the West—provides an important indication of the *perceived* level of Israeli-Uzbek cooperation.

1991–1994 OVERVIEW

In the first phase of the relationship, Israel established diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan and began the process of cementing Tashkent's orientation on regional affairs through economical and commercial relations. United in a common perception of the threats of Iranian-backed extremism and Islamist terrorism, Israeli-

³²⁷ Based upon the author's discussions with Western and Uzbek political observers in the United Kingdom and Uzbekistan, 2004.

Uzbek relations grew close. Moreover, Israel sought to secure Uzbek neutrality in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

With the Oslo Accords (1993), many nations that had previously kept Israel at arm's length extended diplomatic relations as Israel implemented Oslo. Israel's isolation in the international community lessened further as relations began to normalize with the Palestinians. As the taboo of dealing with the Jewish state began to recede, the utility of maintaining positive relations with non-Arab Muslim states began to lose its importance to Israel. As a result, Israel's attentions were directed away from the relationship with Uzbekistan. In the second phase of the relationship, this trend would continue.

PHASE II, 1995–1997: INTERLUDE

Israeli-Uzbek ties leveled off in the second phase of the relationship. During this period, Israel's need for friendly relations with non-Arab Muslim states receded in importance. This was based on the presumption that following the signing of the Declaration of Principles (1993), peace with Jordan (1994), and progress on relations with the Palestinians, Israeli diplomatic isolation would soon end. Acceptance and recognition in the international community were optimistically believed would soon follow. As some Arab states began to thaw in their relations with Israel, Israel eased the urgency of its efforts in Uzbekistan.

Changes in Israel's security calculus occurred during this period. The assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish extremist (November 1995), Hezbollah's renewed cross-border shelling of northern Israel, *Operation Grapes of Wrath* in Lebanon, a series of deadly terrorist attacks by Islamic Jihad, and looming Turkish-Syrian hostilities refocused Israeli security attentions closer to home.

During this period Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was elected, mainly (it was hoped) to bring security to Israel. The newly elected Likud government thus de-emphasized negotiations with Israel's Arab neighbors and replaced this with renewed efforts to bring security to Israel from Arab enemies, both real and imagined.

There was little diplomatic activity between Israel and Uzbekistan during this period, although commercial relations continued. During the second phase of their relationship there was no significant security cooperation other than the sales of weapons and ammunition from Israel to Uzbekistan. Annual trade continued to increase, and the foundations of the Israeli-Uzbek relationship remained intact.

Between 1995 and 1997, there were only two political developments of note aside from Kamilov's visit. The first took place in 1996 when Uzbekistan protested against anti-Israeli platforms introduced by the Iranians at a summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The second was the Uzbek decision to upgrade the status of its diplomatic representation in Israel to a full embassy (March 1997). These two events show that in spite of a pause in the official interaction between the two nations, the Uzbeks sought to maintain the solidity of the relationship and to improve their ties with Israel.³²⁸ These efforts would be recognized by the Israelis in the third period of the relationship, to be examined later in this chapter.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

There was relatively little diplomatic activity between the two nations in this period from 1995 to 1997. With the exception of a visit by the Uzbek Water Minister³²⁹ (and his counterparts in the region-wide National Committee for

³²⁸ James M. Dorsey, "Karimov, West share interests in Central Asia," *The Washington Times*, 26 June 1996.

³²⁹ "Central Asian Ministers for Water Affairs Come to Israel," *MASHAV News, Shalom Magazine*, no. 2 (1997): p. 4.

Coordinating Water Resources), Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov was the only Uzbek officially to visit Israel. There were no official Israeli visits to Uzbekistan during this period.

Uzbek Foreign Minister Kamilov traveled to Israel in April 1997. While in Israel, Kamilov signed several agreements intended to further cooperation in a number of areas, including culture, science, and education.³³⁰ These were the only agreements reached during this phase and they occurred toward the end of it, marking the beginnings of another shift in Israel's relationship with Uzbekistan.

Economic Cooperation Organization Protests and Operation Grapes of Wrath

Uzbekistan became a full member of ECO in 1992, when full membership was extended in November of that year to all the former Soviet Central Asian republics, as well as Azerbaijan and Afghanistan. ECO was originally founded in 1964 by Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan as an organization called Regional Cooperation for Development, and it became ECO in 1985.³³¹ Since 1992, Uzbekistan has attended ECO meetings and participated in the organization's activities. While its stated objective is to advance the socio-economic development and integration of member states, because Iran led the re-establishment of ECO and because its secretariat is located in Teheran, the organization has largely served as a conduit for increased Iranian penetration into Central Asia.

At the May 1996 ECO summit, Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani gave a speech critical of Israel³³² and the United States, and the Iranian delegation introduced several anti-Israeli platforms into the summit discussions.

³³⁰ "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 1.

³³¹ David Menashri, "Iran and Central Asia," in *Central Asia Meets the Middle East*, ed. David Menashri (London, 1998), p. 96, note 58.

³³² Andre Grabot, "Five-year-old Uzbekistan lacks democracy but it is a US favourite," *Agence France-Presse*, 1 September 1996.

Visibly disturbed by this, Uzbek President Karimov threatened to withdraw from ECO and stated that he opposed “transforming the organization into a military-political unit.”³³³ At Karimov’s insistence, Uzbekistan walked out of the summit in protest. The Uzbek position was supported by both Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, both of whom left the May 1996 ECO summit early in solidarity. For Uzbekistan, it was not simply enough to walk out of the summit or to boycott ECO—Tashkent went as far as threatening to withdraw its membership over the issue. Uzbekistan would not have taken these steps—nor would Kazakhstan or Tajikistan—if relations with Israel were not significant, and certainly not if they were less valuable than ties with Teheran.³³⁴

Karimov, criticizing Iran in remarks which drew the attention of Washington and Israel, reportedly said, “If the ECO is to be a political forum for insulting absent countries, my country will withdraw from the organization.”³³⁵ Karimov’s threat to withdraw from the Economic Cooperation Organization for “Iran’s ‘politicization’ of the ECO by criticism of Israel”³³⁶ was serious and had regional implications. Kyrgyzstan joined Kazakhstan and Tajikistan in support of Karimov’s move. Ultimately, it matters little whether Karimov’s actions were motivated out of a desire to protect Israel, stand up to Iran, or initiate an assertive and independent Uzbek foreign policy. The episode serves as an example of how Israel’s constructive engagement with Tashkent resulted in problems for Iran in the region: Israel’s relationship with Uzbekistan was strong enough to make possible their protest against Iran’s “politicization.” No matter the reason, this could be seen as a victory for Israeli

³³³ Lowell Bezanis, “ECO Summit Rumpus,” *OMRI Daily Digest* 2, no. 94 (15 May 1996).

³³⁴ Bezanis, “ECO Summit Rumpus.”

³³⁵ Grabot, “Five-year-old Uzbekistan.”

³³⁶ Curtis, ed., *Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan*, p. xxv.

policy this was a victory because the incident ended in an Iranian diplomatic setback in the region.

This episode also marked the beginning of a new aspect of the Israeli-Uzbek relationship. Uzbekistan would increasingly use its voice in international organizations to blunt criticism of Israel, especially within the United Nations General Assembly (discussed below). The May 1996 ECO summit took place one month after Israel launched *Operation Grapes of Wrath* in Lebanon. Designed to end Hezbollah's shelling of northern Israel, the 16-day military assault (11–27 April 1996) generated fierce outrage throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds. In light of this event and the regional turmoil it caused, it is noteworthy that Uzbekistan led opposition to Iran's attempts to criticize Israel within an organization of Muslim countries. The fact that Tashkent was able to lead other Central Asian states in protest reinforced the usefulness of the Uzbek relationship to Israeli policy makers.

Uzbek Upgrade in Representation

The second political development to take place during this period when Uzbekistan upgraded the status of its diplomatic representation in Israel from a consulate to a full embassy in March 1997, in recognition of the importance of the relationship with Israel. This demonstrates that despite an outward lack of engagement in the Israeli-Uzbek relationship, there remained a desire of the parties to maintain the firm foundation on which ties had been built. Moreover, it shows that Tashkent was not dissuaded from pursuing further interactions with Israel regardless of Israel redirecting its attention to matters closer to home.

One month before Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov was scheduled to make the only official visit to Israel in this phase of the relationship, President

Karimov made the announcement about upgrading Uzbekistan's representation in Israel to embassy level before a visiting delegation from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. While the official decision was made several days before the official announcement, the choice of audience demonstrates both the importance Uzbekistan placed on positive relations with Israel and the Uzbek *perception* of the Conference's political clout both in Israel and America.³³⁷

This last point is significant because Tashkent believed that close ties with Israel would translate into a corresponding closeness with the United States. Throughout the relationship, the Uzbeks sought to use their ties with Israel to improve relations with Washington. In 1994 (in the first phase of the relationship) Uzbekistan asked the Israelis to intercede on their behalf in Washington, and in 1999 (in the third phase of the relationship) Natan Sharansky and Kamilov made joint appearances in Washington, so that the Uzbeks could capitalize on Israel's ability to open doors in Washington.³³⁸ Karimov had previously met in Tashkent with visiting delegations of American Jewish groups, using such opportunities to highlight his nation's ties with Israel in attempts to build Uzbekistan's political capital with the United States. Such efforts have brought rewards to Uzbekistan, in the form of support from the American Jewish community³³⁹ and recognition of Uzbekistan's struggle against extremism.³⁴⁰

³³⁷ Data in this paragraph taken from Aryeh Dean Cohen, "Uzbekistan opens embassy in Tel Aviv," *The Jerusalem Post*, 9 March 1997; and "Jews in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan live in Muslim World," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 17 March 2003.

³³⁸ Hillel Kuttler, "Sharansky, Uzbekistan FM to boost ties through joint US appearances," *The Jerusalem Post*, 11 March 1999.

³³⁹ "American Jewish leaders wish victory to Uzbek leader in presidential election," *Uzbek Television first channel* (Tashkent), in Russian, 3 January 2000, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports* (3 January 2000).

³⁴⁰ Such ties were highlighted in the aftermath of the violence in Andijon in May, 2005. See Marc Perelman, "Uzbek Unrest Shines Light on Leader's Ties to Jewry," *The Forward* (New York), 27 May 2005.

Development Assistance

During the second phase of the relationship, Israel continued their low-level assistance programs to Uzbekistan. Most notable was a soil management and forestry project MASHAV administered with the Uzbek Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.³⁴¹ Like other Israeli ventures in Central Asia, this project benefited from American financial support delivered through USAID. The project was intended to assist the expansion of the Uzbek agricultural sector through improvements to land that had been destroyed by years of improper irrigation techniques; specifically, this project targeted the reclamation of water-logged, high-salinity lands in Ferghana.³⁴² MASHAV's project introduced new trees specifically grown to "biologically drain and restore unusable land and return these lands for agricultural use and timber production in the Ferghana Valley."³⁴³ Also during this period MASHAV administered one of its biggest projects in the region, an agricultural program at the Ahmed Yassaviy collective farm near Tashkent.³⁴⁴

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

The second phase of the relationship saw stronger trade relations than during the previous period. Total trade turnover doubled from 1995 to 1996 (from \$9 million to \$18 million; see table 4.5), and that level remained constant for 1997. Israeli exports to Uzbekistan rose in 1995 to \$7.6 million, nearly double the amount of the previous year. The level of exports more than doubled in the next year: in 1996,

³⁴¹ "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 6.

³⁴² "MASHAV: Help to Emerging Nations," n.p., n.d., document in the collection of the author.

³⁴³ "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 6. See also "USAID-MASHAV Partnership in Central Asia," MASHAV Center for International Cooperation, n.d., <http://www.mashav.mfa.gov.il>; and "US-Israeli Cooperation in Central Asia: USAID's Partnership with Israel's MASHAV," 4 December 2004, http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/car/briefers/machav/html.

³⁴⁴ "Israeli Cooperation Center Opens Tashkent Club," *Biznes Vestnik Vostoka* (Tashkent) in Russian, 15 September 1995, p. 1, in FBIS-CE-92 (27 September 1995), p. 93.

\$18.6 million worth of goods was exported to Uzbekistan. In 1997, the amount remained nearly the same at \$18.3 million.³⁴⁵

During the same period, Israeli imports from Uzbekistan were much more modest. In 1995, \$1.4 million of imports was recorded. However, that level dropped significantly during the next two years: in 1996 and 1997, Israel imported only \$0.3 million and \$0.6 million respectively.³⁴⁶

Table 4.5 Israeli-Uzbek Trade, 1995-1997
(in Millions of Dollars)

	1995	1996	1997
Exports	\$7.6	\$18.6	\$18.3
Imports	\$1.4	\$0.3	\$0.6

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel).

Major Commercial Investments, 1995-1997

Commercial relations during the second phase of the relationship were limited, as shown in table 4.6. Aside from the agricultural projects that continued into the second phase of the relationship, Israeli commercial activity was limited to the technology, defense, and food processing sectors.

The Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations noted that during this phase, 3.5 percent of all Uzbek imports from Israel were classified as “weapons and munitions.”³⁴⁷ Model agricultural farms were also established in Uzbekistan “with guidance from Israeli experts stationed”³⁴⁸ in the region. This latter project also involved

³⁴⁵ *Foreign Trade Statistics Monthly*, Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel), http://www1.cbs.gov.il/fr_trade/ftmenu_e_v1_new.htm.

³⁴⁶ *Foreign Trade Statistics Monthly*, http://www1.cbs.gov.il/fr_trade/ftmenu_e_v1_new.htm.

³⁴⁷ “Information on Commercial-Economic Relations,” p. 3.

³⁴⁸ “Ministry of Foreign Affairs: The Year in Review,” *Israel Government Year Book*, 1999, <http://www.israel.org/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0gb10> (accessed 5 March 2001).

Table 4.6 Major Israeli Projects, 1995–1997

Year	Project	Sector	Business(es) Involved	Contract size (where known)
1995	Software and computer services	Technology	UCD Micros (joint venture)	NA
mid-1990s	Wetland reclamation	Agricultural	MASHAV funded	NA
mid-1990s	Weapons and ammunition sales	Defense	<i>not known</i>	(3% of all imports from Israel)
mid-1990s	Food processing	Food processing	Flex International Manufacturing and Trading Ltd	NA
mid-1990s	Cattle farming and animal husbandry	Agricultural	<i>not known</i>	<i>Not known</i>

Sources: Uzbek Foreign Economic Relations Ministry; MASHAV; author's research.

sending “hundreds of participants”³⁴⁹ to Israel for training in agriculture, medicine, and education. Israeli “counselors were dispatched on brief missions as consultants in these fields”³⁵⁰ to conduct traveling courses, an example of how commercial relations were fused with the advancement of diplomatic objectives and development assistance missions. The food trading firm Flex International Manufacturing and Trading Ltd was one of only two representative businesses fully accredited by the Uzbek Ministry of Justice; the other Israeli business is Netafim.³⁵¹

In the technology sector, UCD Micros operated in a number of areas, including software development, computer training, and network and telecom maintenance. This joint venture also performed secure work for the National Bank

³⁴⁹ “Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” <http://www.israel.org/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0gb10> (accessed 5 March 2001).

³⁵⁰ “Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” <http://www.israel.org/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0gb10> (accessed 5 March 2001).

³⁵¹ “Information on Commercial-Economic Relations,” p. 6.

for Foreign Economic Activity and Visa.³⁵² UCD Micros could not have held contracts that dealt with critical and sensitive aspects of Uzbek financial infrastructure without some support and encouragement from the Israeli government. Such 'assistance' helps promote and facilitate contracts with the Uzbek National Bank for Foreign Economic Activity. This type of business facilitation activities are in line with comments made by Israeli trade officials that their government actively supported and encouraged Israeli businesses, especially with respect to the hi-tech sector.³⁵³

As in the previous period, there is much that is still not known regarding the specifics of Israel's commercial relationship with Uzbekistan from 1995–1997. Although many Israeli sources indicate the level of investment between the two countries, in this analysis it again appears that much more was promised and discussed than was actually followed through upon.

1995–1997 OVERVIEW

The second phase of the relationship between Israel and Uzbekistan saw a noticeable reduction in the pace of development. As Israel was focused on other, more immediate concerns, the Israeli-Uzbek relationship seemed to level off as a result of a lack of engagement. Nonetheless, as will be demonstrated in the next section, it is important to note that Israel's relationship with Uzbekistan did not deteriorate appreciably during this period. Because of this, the relationship would grow much stronger during the next phase.

Israeli policy had optimistically anticipated that regional security would increase because of Israel's steps towards normalization with its Arab neighbors;

³⁵² Data regarding the Israeli-Uzbek joint venture UCD Micros is drawn from the prospectus of the Uzbekistan Computer Design Group (UCD Group).

³⁵³ Based upon author's field research in Israel (2005) and Uzbekistan (2006).

because this did not happen, Israel would again turn its attentions towards Uzbekistan. Strong ties with Tashkent would help block Iranian ambitions, demonstrate to the world that Israel was not alone in its fight against Islamist terrorism, and combat Israel's anti-Muslim image. Furthermore, Israel could advance its security policy by working with Uzbekistan even when it appeared that it could not do so with its regional Arab neighbors. In stepping back from the peace process, Israel sought to regain regional initiative. The conditions that had previously led Israel to decrease the scope of its interaction with Uzbekistan were now underscoring the reasons for Israel's re-engagement with Tashkent.

PHASE III, 1998–2001: RE-ENGAGEMENT

Following the lull in relations from 1995–1997, Israel re-engaged with Uzbekistan during the last phase of the relationship to be examined in this chapter. Realizing that Israel's security was not being strategically furthered by its policies with its immediate Arab neighbors, the benefits of positive relations with Uzbekistan were reaffirmed. As a means to block Iran and staunch the spread of Islamist terror, warm ties with Uzbekistan were believed would promote Israeli interests and security.

In this third phase of the relationship, Israeli policy towards Uzbekistan involved diplomatic and political interaction, economic and commercial ties, and security cooperation. More visits took place and more agreements were created than during the other periods examined. This built upon the foundations that had previously been laid and created a strong framework for cooperation. Israel was successful in its objective to thwart Iran, thus preventing the emergence of a hostile government in Tashkent. Uzbekistan shared Israel's suspicions of Teheran and

radical Islam, and became a steady international actor, aligned with Israeli interests and protective of its local Jewish communities.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

During this final period, a number of significant political events occurred. President Karimov made his first visit to Israel and several high-ranking Israelis visited Uzbekistan, as detailed in table 4.7. Through these visits, a great number of international agreements were signed (see table 4.8), creating a strong framework for the friendship. Trade restrictions eased and Uzbekistan did not add to the pressure on Israel to make concessions in the peace negotiations with the Palestinians. The more important visits and an analysis of their impact on the relationship follows below.

Table 4.7 Major Visits, 1998–2001

Date	Visitor	Purpose	Location
May '98	PM Benjamin Netanyahu	Official visit	Uzbekistan
Jul '98	Minister of Industry and Trade Natan Sharansky	Trade promotion tour	Uzbekistan
Late '98	Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai	Discussion of increased relations & defense cooperation	Uzbekistan
Sep '98	President Islam Karimov	Official state visit	Israel
Sep '98	<i>President Islam Karimov</i>	<i>Working visit</i>	<i>Ramallah</i>
Apr '99	<i>PLO Chairman Arafat</i>	<i>Working visit</i>	<i>Uzbekistan</i>
mid- 1999	Uzbek Health Minister	Discussion of increased relations	Israel
mid- 1999	Uzbek Agriculture Minister	Discussion of increased relations	Israel
Jul '01	Minister of National Infrastructure Avigdor Liberman	Trade promotion tour	Uzbekistan

Sources: Har-TASS; FBIS; BBC SWB; Eurasianet.org; author's research.

Table 4.8 Major Agreements, 1998-2001

Date	Agreement	Focus	Where Signed
Jun '98	Bilateral trade agreement	Economic	Uzbekistan
Jun '98	Economic cooperation agreement	Economic	Uzbekistan
Jun '98	Agreement to assist in irrigation	Economic	Uzbekistan
Jun '98	Agreement to build greenhouses	Economic	Uzbekistan
Sep '98	Protocol on the Joint Establishment of Cultural Centers and their Activities	Academic/cultural	Israel
Sep '98	Plan for Cooperation in the Sphere of Public Health and Medicine between the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Health of the State of Israel	Public health	Israel
Sep '98	Agreement on Commercial and Economic Cooperation (signed)	Economic	Israel
Sep '98	Agreement on technical cooperation	Technical	Israel
Sep '98	Agreement on cooperation in the sphere of agriculture	Economic	Israel
Sep '98	Agreement on cooperation in the sphere of environmental protection	Technical/ecological	Israel
Sep '98	Protocol on mutual assistance in customs affairs	Economic	Israel
Sep '98	Cooperation between the National Bank of Foreign Economic Activities of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Israeli Foreign Trade Risks Corporation (IFTRIC)	Economic	Israel
Sep '98	Protocol on double taxation (ratified early 1999, implementation 1 Jan 2000)	Economic	Israel
Sep '98	Protocol on the prevention of tax evasion	Economic	Israel
Feb '99	Agreement on Commercial and Economic Cooperation (<i>came into force</i>)	Economic	NA
Mar '01	Samarqand-Tel Aviv flight agreement	Economic	NA
May '01	Agreement on servicing and refueling of El Al planes in Tashkent	Economic	NA
May '01	Agreement on servicing and refueling of Uzbekistan Havo Yullari planes in Tel Aviv	Economic	NA
Jul '01	Joint declaration on prospects for trade and cooperation	Economic	Uzbekistan
Jul '01	Discussion of air transit cooperation	Economic	Uzbekistan
Jul '01	Joint economic declaration	Economic	Uzbekistan

Sources: FBIS; BBC SWB; Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs; author's research.

Cultural and academic exchanges also grew during this period. In July 2000 the Israeli embassy, Jewish Agency, and the Shalom Jewish Center in Bukhara organized an exhibition of work depicting Jerusalem by well-known Israeli photographers.³⁵⁴ This was the fourth in a series of similar exhibitions organized by the Israeli government in Uzbekistan. Other similar activities included concerts featuring Israeli and Uzbek musicians, a festival of Israeli art, and an Israeli film festival.³⁵⁵

Visit of Prime Minister Netanyahu

On 28 May 1998, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stopped in Tashkent en route from China. In meetings with President Karimov and Prime Minister Utkir Sultanov, Netanyahu discussed issues of importance to Israel, including Iran's nuclear program, Islamist extremism, and developments in regional security. No agreements were signed during this visit; however, Netanyahu invited Karimov to visit Israel, and initial discussions of his official visit began at this time.³⁵⁶

Netanyahu's visit to Tashkent was significant and indicated that the third phase of Israel's relationship with Uzbekistan had begun. It was one month shy of four years since the last official Israeli visit, and with Netanyahu's meetings in Tashkent, Israeli policy had shifted to include re-engagement with Uzbekistan. In the Arab world, Israel's renewed attentions toward Uzbekistan were seen as a move that allowed Israel to avoid the constraints that had developed in dealing with its Arab

³⁵⁴ "Jerusalem from a Bird's Eye View," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 20 July 2000.

³⁵⁵ "Festival of Israeli art," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 1 February 2001.

³⁵⁶ "Israeli Prime Minister in Tashkent," *RFE/RL Newslines: Transcaucasia & Central Asia*, 29 May 1998.

neighbors and in effect, to concentrate on building ties with non-Arab 'Muslim' nations with which Israel could accomplish its foreign policy objectives.³⁵⁷

Netanyahu's visit was followed quickly by two other senior visits. In July 1998 a trade promotion tour was led by Minister of Industry and Trade Natan Sharansky and in late summer Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai traveled to Tashkent. Mordechai was reported to have discussed defense cooperation with the Uzbek government, although no public documents were signed during his stay. These two visits built upon Netanyahu's re-invigoration of the relationship with Uzbekistan. Sharansky's visit is detailed in the section on economic relations later in this chapter.

Karimov's Official Visit to Israel

President Karimov made a three-day official visit to Israel beginning on 14 September 1998 during which Israeli-Uzbek cooperation was greatly advanced. The issues discussed included the increased threat of Islamist extremism, as well as economic and commercial relations. Karimov stressed Israeli-Uzbek economic ties as a means to build greater cooperation between Israel and Tashkent, and he reiterated his government's strong opposition to Islamist extremism.³⁵⁸ In addition to Karimov's meetings with Israeli President Weisman and Prime Minister Netanyahu, Karimov also met with Sharansky and Israeli business leaders.³⁵⁹

During his 15 September 1998 meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, the two leaders discussed Islamist extremism and the proliferation of weapons of mass

³⁵⁷ "Netanyahu seen trying to sidestep the Arabs by forging ties with Central Asian States," *Mideast Mirror* 12, no. 122 (1 July 1998): p. 19, quoting Atef al-Gomhari, *al-Ahram* (Cairo), 1 July 1998.

³⁵⁸ Danna Harman, "Uzbek leader, Netanyahu pledge to fight fundamentalism," *The Jerusalem Post*, 16 September 1998.

³⁵⁹ "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 1.

destruction (WMDs) as threats to regional security.³⁶⁰ Netanyahu said of Israeli and Uzbek threat perceptions, "We adhere to the same assessment of the danger to peace and stability in the region, and intend to work in this sphere hand in hand."³⁶¹

A series of agreements were signed while Karimov was in Israel regarding commercial, economic, technical, agricultural, and ecological cooperation.³⁶² Also signed were protocols to avoid double taxation, prevent income tax evasion, promote mutual assistance in customs affairs, and an agreement ensuring "Cooperation Between the National Bank of Foreign Economic Activities of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Israeli Foreign Trade Risks [Insurance] Corporation (IFTRIC)."³⁶³ In all, nine bilateral documents were signed. Speaking to over 100 Israeli businessmen, Karimov stated that "the most important part of our cooperation is economic. We are very impressed by the Israeli technologies we have seen."³⁶⁴ He added that the trade agreements signed during his stay would facilitate greater technological agricultural cooperation.³⁶⁵

On security issues, Karimov agreed to "exchange information about the common threat perceived to be emerging from Iran,"³⁶⁶ and to build on the defense cooperation agreed during Mordechai's visit to Uzbekistan.³⁶⁷ Karimov and Netanyahu discussed ways in which the two countries could cooperate in combating terrorism, prohibiting the proliferation of WMDs and fighting threats to regional

³⁶⁰ "Uzbek President in Israel," *Central Asia Monitor*, no 5 (1998): p. 35, and "Uzbek president winds up visit to Israel," *Itar-TASS World Service in English*, 16 September 1998, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 16 September 1998.

³⁶¹ "Uzbek president winds up," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 16 September 1998.

³⁶² "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 2. See also "Uzbek President in Israel," p. 35, and Harman, "Uzbek leader, Netanyahu pledge."

³⁶³ "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 2.

³⁶⁴ David Makovsky, "Israel, Uzbekistan to join forces on Iran," *Ha'aretz*, 16 September 1998.

³⁶⁵ Makovsky, "Israel, Uzbekistan join forces."

³⁶⁶ Makovsky, "Israel, Uzbekistan join forces."

³⁶⁷ Steve Rodan, "Uzbekistan sees Israel as defense partner," *The Jerusalem Post*, 17 September 1998.

security and stability, although no security protocols were signed.³⁶⁸ While in Israel, Karimov spoke out against extremism and pledged to continue the battle against the joint enemy of Israel and Uzbekistan: Islamist terrorism. To vividly underscore his position, Karimov spoke at a reception held in his honor about his country's relationship with Israel and he stated (to very warm applause) that "Islamists deserve to have their heads cut off, and I am prepared personally to do that."³⁶⁹

Uzbekistan and the Palestinian Authority

While in the region, Karimov also traveled to Ramallah to meet with PLO Chairman Arafat in September 1998. Karimov was identified by Arafat not just as his close personal friend, but as a friend to all the Palestinian people.³⁷⁰ Arafat commented that his talks with Karimov were "constructive, successful, and very important," and that the Uzbek president was "very interested in the success and protection of the peace process,"³⁷¹ Although Karimov acknowledged to reporters that he and Arafat did not discuss the peace process at all.³⁷² For his part, Karimov told reporters that he was pleased to meet with Arafat, and stated that Uzbekistan "fully supports the Palestinian people" and that his visit expressed "the support of the Uzbek people and government for the Palestinian people."³⁷³

While it is interesting to note that Karimov met with Arafat of greater interest is the lack of any substantial dialogue or accords between the two leaders. The two did not even discuss publicly the peace process. Uzbekistan was firmly aligned with

³⁶⁸ Harman, "Uzbek leader, Netanyahu pledge," and Makovsky, "Israel, Uzbekistan join forces."

³⁶⁹ "Uzbekistan's 'unholy alliance' with Israel," *Mideast Mirror* 12, no. 235 (21 October 1998): p. 12, quoting Mohammad al-Sammak, *al-Ahram* (Cairo), 21 October 1998.

³⁷⁰ "Uzbek President in Israel," p. 35.

³⁷¹ "Mideast: Uzbek president visits Arafat in Ramallah; joint news conference held," *Voice of Palestine radio* (Ramallah), in Arabic, 15 September 1998, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 15 September 1998.

³⁷² "Mideast: Uzbek president," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 15 September 1998.

³⁷³ "Mideast: Uzbek president," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 15 September 1998.

Israel, yet Tashkent sought to maintain the perception of solidarity with the Palestinians. While Karimov was praising Arafat and the Palestinian people, the Uzbek government was doing little in fact to advance the Palestinian cause. As will be examined later in this chapter, despite the president's statements, when presented with opportunities to support the Palestinians in the UN General Assembly, after March 1998 the Uzbek delegation did not vote in favor of resolutions supportive of the Palestinian cause. Nonetheless, Karimov did invite Arafat to come to Tashkent in October 1998 for the 1225th birthday anniversary of Imam al-Bukhari.³⁷⁴

Six months after their meeting in Ramallah, Arafat stopped to Tashkent to discuss the declaration of a Palestinian state with Karimov while en route to China. This April 1999 visit took place right before the deadline for the conclusion of permanent status negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians per the Wye River Memorandum. Arafat sought to gain Uzbek support for the exercise of "the legitimate Palestinian national right to set up their independent state."³⁷⁵ The fact that Arafat did not secure official Uzbek support coupled with the lack of Uzbek support in the UN General Assembly demonstrate that Israel was achieving subtle victories through its relationship with Tashkent.

Karimov's September 1998 visit to Israel was a success for its policy of constructive engagement with Uzbekistan. Israel was able to continue Uzbek neutrality in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and confirm Tashkent's strong opposition to both Islamist extremism and Iranian interference in the region. Furthermore, to have a Muslim ally of Israel travel to meet with the Palestinians and *not* discuss the peace process served two of Israel's goals: it helped to divert attention from the peace process.

³⁷⁴ "Mideast: Uzbek president," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 15 September 1998.

³⁷⁵ "Arafat holds 'successful' meeting with Jiang Zemin," *Palestinian Radio* (Ramallah), in Arabic, 15 April 1999, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 15 April 1999.

Development Assistance As Diplomacy

Israeli development assistance continued to be an avenue for Israeli engagement with Uzbekistan during the last phase of the relationship. Israel was involved in two main assistance programs during this period: the creation of private sector agricultural enterprises and public health programs. On the first project, MASHAV sought to assist formerly state-run farms in Uzbekistan in their transformation to free-market operations. One part of this program involved the Akkurgan demonstration farm and aimed to partially create private family dairy farms. Work at this farm had previously focused on dairy cattle husbandry and veterinary care. At Akkurgan, Israeli experts living in Uzbekistan as well as short-term visiting Israeli trainers sought to improve feed systems, computerize farm processes, market dairy products (such as yogurt, butter, and cheeses), and establish private, commercially viable farms. This was supplemented by a series of Russian-language training programs held in Israel for Uzbek participants. The project was made possible with the assistance and cooperation of USAID, the Uzbek Commercial Development Bank, and the Uzbek Ministry of Agriculture.³⁷⁶

The project at Akkurgan was one of MASHAV's biggest in Uzbekistan.³⁷⁷ The Israeli Foreign Ministry attached significant importance to this project as evidenced by its description of the program. The Foreign Ministry described its goal as assisting

in the process of modernization; privatization [of]
human resource development; transfer of appropriate
technologies; advisory services and other support
activities to the agricultural sector, geared towards a

³⁷⁶ "Dairy Cattle Husbandry Demonstration Project in Uzbekistan," *MASHAV – Center for International Cooperation*, 20 July 1998, <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il>.

³⁷⁷ "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 5.

market-oriented economy. The program also aims to encourage privatization, market development and in particular, the development of the emerging private family rural sector.³⁷⁸

Such objectives were seen as an investment in furthering Uzbekistan's commercial viability, and as money well spent to prevent the emergence of instability in the country. The latter goal was a central objective for Israeli policy in Central Asia because it was thought that instability in Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian republics would lead to the development of a regime unfriendly to Israeli interests and security.

The second area in which MASHAV was active during this period was the public health sector. Israeli medical teams performed hundreds of eye surgery operations and participated in numerous blindness prevention missions.³⁷⁹ In addition to training local doctors, the Israelis donated the ophthalmological equipment they had brought to their Uzbek counterparts, rather than shipping the equipment back to Israel.³⁸⁰ In 2000, Israel also donated over \$10,000 for medicines to be used in Karakalpakstan.³⁸¹

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

In 1998, Israeli private investment in Uzbekistan was estimated to be in excess of \$20 million, which while "not huge" was a "sign of the potential" size of the market and a "sign of the future."³⁸² In 2000 there were 45 Israeli-Uzbek joint

³⁷⁸ "Dairy Cattle Husbandry," <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il>.

³⁷⁹ Judy Siegel-Itzkovich, "MASHAV's Medical Activities Highlighted," *The Jerusalem Post*, 24 October 2004.

³⁸⁰ Siegel-Itzkovich, "MASHAV's Medical Activities Highlighted."

³⁸¹ "Israel donated medicines worth \$10,000 to Karakalpakstan [sic]," *Narodnoye Solov* (Tashkent), 25 November 2000.

³⁸² Hershel Shanks and Suzanne F. Singer, "Oil and Jews on the Silk Road," *Moment* (Washington, DC), vol. 23, no. 5, October 1998, p. 68.

ventures³⁸³ and five officially accredited representative offices of Israeli businesses.³⁸⁴ Israeli investment in the Uzbek energy sector alone was estimated at over \$158 million.³⁸⁵

Over the course of the last phase of the Israeli-Uzbek relationship examined in this chapter, total trade turnover rose from \$11.2 million in 1998 to \$20.1 million in 2001 (see table 4.9). These figures were led by Israeli exports to Uzbekistan which rose to \$10.1 million in 1998 to \$16.3 million in 1999. After a drop to \$9.9 million in 2000, Israeli exports returned to \$17.8 million in 2001. Imports from Uzbekistan rose from the previous year to \$1.1 million in 1998, then dropped to \$0.4 million in 1999. These levels rose again in 2000 and 2001 to \$1.5 million and \$2.3 million, respectively.³⁸⁶

Table 4.9 Israeli-Uzbek trade, 1998–2001
(in Millions of Dollars)

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Exports	\$10.1	\$16.3	\$9.9	\$17.8
Imports	\$1.1	\$0.4	\$1.5	\$2.3

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel).

Sharansky's Trade Promotion Tour

In June 1998, Natan Sharansky, Israel's Minister of Industry and Trade, led a trade delegation of Israeli business leaders and industrialists to Uzbekistan.³⁸⁷ While in Tashkent, Sharansky met with President Karimov and held a series of meetings at the Ministries of Foreign Economic Relations, Agriculture, and Power and

³⁸³ Blau, "Israel Emerges," <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed on 21 August 2001).

³⁸⁴ Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "Uzbekistan-Israel: New Facets of Cooperation," <http://www.mfer.uz/english/news/05&07&2001.html> (accessed 27 July 2002).

³⁸⁵ "Uzbekistan and Israel Share the Same Enemy," *ALA*, 9 January 2005.

³⁸⁶ *Foreign Trade Statistics Monthly*, http://www1.cbs.gov.il/fr_trade/fmenu_e_v1_new.htm.

³⁸⁷ "Israeli delegation to visit Uzbekistan," n.p., 27 June 1998, http://uzland.info/06_27_98.htm (accessed 8 April 2006).

Electrification.³⁸⁸ Several agreements were signed during Sharansky's visit, including accords on bilateral trade and economic cooperation³⁸⁹ and agreements for several Israeli projects in the agricultural sector. Sharansky also worked on an agreement on Most Favored Nation trade status that was signed a few months later, in September 1998.³⁹⁰ It was reiterated that Israel has had "particularly" good relations with Uzbekistan, in large part because of Tashkent's "tough stand against militant Islam" and the warm relationship between the Uzbek government and the region's largest Jewish community.³⁹¹

Karimov highlighted Uzbekistan's expanding relationship with Israel and praised cooperation with Israel in meetings with Sharansky; he told reporters, "We have a lot of experience in economic cooperation with Israel." Sharansky explained that the Israeli government "gives a lot of support to enterprises and companies that invest in Uzbekistan." This statement was the clearest to date in indicating that the Israeli government was assisting and subsidizing Israeli private-sector investments and business ventures in Uzbekistan in order to further its policy of constructive engagement.³⁹²

In a two-hour meeting with Karimov, Sharansky discussed Israel's two foreign and security policy concerns regarding Uzbekistan: terrorism and Islamist extremism. An important reason for Sharansky's visit was that he confirm Uzbekistan's position regarding these two concerns because it was central to Israeli policy that Israel and Uzbekistan maintain alignment on them. Commenting on their shared perception of

³⁸⁸ "Uzbek president praises growing relations with Israel," *Itar-TASS World Service* (Moscow), in Russian, 1610 GMT 1 July 1998, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 1 July 1998.

³⁸⁹ "Israel and Uzbekistan sign trade agreement," *BBC World Service*, 2 July 1998. See also "Uzbek president praises relations," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 1 July 1998.

³⁹⁰ "Uzbek president praises relations," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 1 July 1998. See also Boris Rumer and Stanislav Zhukov, *Central Asia: The Challenges of Independence* (London, 1998), p. 228, and "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 3.

³⁹¹ "Israeli trade minister visits Uzbekistan," *BBC World Service*, 30 June 1998.

³⁹² "Uzbek president praises relations," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 1 July 1998.

the twin threats of terrorism and Islamist extremism, Sharansky stated that "we suffer from it and Uzbekistan, an Islamic country, is doing its utmost to prevent such extremity [on its territory]." ³⁹³

Building on his praise of Uzbek efforts to battle terrorism and extremism, Sharansky considered Uzbekistan a model of development for the Muslim world, where a strong government enforced the separation of religion and state. He expressed his support for Tashkent and claimed somewhat optimistically that "in thirty years Uzbekistan not Saudi Arabia would be the center of business in the Muslim world." ³⁹⁴ This rather sanguine remark demonstrated perhaps more the hopes and aspirations some in the Israeli government held for Uzbekistan and the future of the 'Muslim' world, rather than an actual assessment of the future.

Sharansky's visit was significant not only because he carried the government's commerce portfolio, but because he was a native Russian-language speaker, he was afforded greater access to Uzbek leaders than other non-Russian speaking Israeli leaders. Moreover, it is thought that he held a special interest in developing trade and relations with the Central Asian republics, and served both as Israel's unofficial representative to the region. ³⁹⁵ Sharansky was also thought to have served as the prime minister's chief advisor on Central Asian affairs. ³⁹⁶

By the time of Sharansky's visit in June 1998, Israel's commercial interests included investment in the hydrocarbon and mineral recovery sectors as well as the export of "telecommunications, chemical fertilizers, machine tools, medical

³⁹³ "Uzbek president praises relations," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 1 July 1998.

³⁹⁴ "Israel and Uzbekistan sign trade agreement," *BBC World Service*, 2 July 1998.

³⁹⁵ This is thought to in part be because of his personal experiences and connection with the former Soviet Union, Hadar, telephone interview. See also David Makovsky, "Uzbekistan may buy arms from Israel," *Ha'aretz*, 2 July 1998.

³⁹⁶ Based on private discussions with the author held in Israel (1999).

equipment, electric devices, agricultural produce, and plastic goods.”³⁹⁷ Israeli trade experts worked with their Uzbek colleagues to help further the development of more open trade and they [Israeli trade experts] also trained Uzbek specialists from the Uzbek Entrepreneurship Development Assistance Project and the Business Support Center during short-term visits to Israel.³⁹⁸

Pace of Commercial and Economic Cooperation

In February 1999 the Agreement on Commercial and Economic Cooperation came into force, and Israel “announced the repeal of special import licenses for Uzbek goods.”³⁹⁹ With the implementation of this accord, both nations cooperated to create an Intergovernmental Uzbek-Israeli Commission for Commercial and Economic Cooperation. This organization was charged with facilitating bilateral trade and commercial relations primarily by increasing trade levels, increasing investments, and according to an Uzbek government report, exploring “new directions and opportunities for bilateral cooperation.”⁴⁰⁰ Also in 1999, the Israeli Institute of Export and IFTRIC rated Uzbekistan as the leading market in Central Asia for Israeli investors and exporters.⁴⁰¹ That same year the Israeli Export and International Cooperation Institute noted that Israeli firms were increasingly winning tenders and contracts in Central Asia, particularly those funded by “the world’s principle international financial institutions.”⁴⁰² Israel’s Bateman Engineering was particularly singled out for its successes in Uzbekistan. Israeli-Uzbek trade demonstrates that

³⁹⁷ “Israeli delegation to visit,” http://uzland.info/06_27_98.htm (accessed 8 April 2006).

³⁹⁸ “Agreement on the creation of scientific and specialists’ fund signed,” *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 2 February 2001.

³⁹⁹ “Information on Commercial-Economic Relations,” p. 2.

⁴⁰⁰ “Information on Commercial-Economic Relations,” p. 2.

⁴⁰¹ “Israeli Insurance For Trade Risks in Uzbekistan,” *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 9 September 1999.

⁴⁰² “International Projects—Proven Interdisciplinary Capabilities,” report produced by the Israeli government’s Israel Export and International Cooperation Institute, n.p., n.d.; document in the collection of the author.

bilateral economic and commercial cooperation in 1999 (as shown in table 4.9, above) was very good. At the time, Uzbekistan was Israel's largest trading partner in Central Asia.

It is noteworthy that although total trade turnover fell in 2000, it rose again in 2001 and reached its highest level at \$20.1 million. This dip in trade turnover may or may not have been partially caused by the Palestinian uprising (al-Aqsa Intifadah) in September 2000 and the subsequent deterioration in Israel's security situation. The trade relationship between Israel and Uzbekistan remained strong regardless of terrorist attacks. The Intergovernmental Uzbek-Israeli Commission for Commercial and Economic Cooperation had scheduled a conference entitled "Do Business in Israel" for December 2001 in Israel; however, due to the security situation in Israel at the time—just three months after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States—the conference was not scrapped altogether, merely rescheduled for a later date.⁴⁰³

Liberman's 2001 Trade Promotion Tour

The implementation of Israeli technologies to utilize renewable solar power had been the subject of bilateral discussions for several years, and in 2000 Israel and Tashkent "announced plans to cooperate on the development of solar technology."⁴⁰⁴ When Minister of National Infrastructure Avigdor Liberman visited Uzbekistan in July 2001, he and his Israeli trade delegation discussed energy conservation and technologies that could utilize renewable power sources. The main topic in these discussions focused on "possible joint power engineering projects" that "encourage

⁴⁰³ "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 2.

⁴⁰⁴ "Uzbekistan: Foreign Investment," document in the collection of the author.

environmentally clean sources of power”⁴⁰⁵ such as the use of solar energy. According to internal Uzbek government documents, the Israeli delegation gave a presentation on the benefits of “utilizing Israeli experience in the sphere of solar energy use”⁴⁰⁶ and are understood to have lobbied the Uzbek government for contracts in this area.

In his meeting with Uzbek Minister for Foreign Economic Relations Elyor Ganiev, Liberman signed several documents (including a joint economic declaration and a joint declaration on prospects for trade and cooperation⁴⁰⁷) and held aviation discussions. Liberman spoke highly of Israeli-Uzbek relations and stated in a press conference that “[w]e hope that the near future will be signified by a great inflow of Israeli investments” to Uzbekistan.⁴⁰⁸

Liberman and Sharansky in Central Asia

It is noteworthy that Liberman led the trade mission: at the time he was not serving in the Trade Ministry but was Minister of National Infrastructure. His seven-day mission to Central Asia to boost Israeli commercial relations indicated he was now Israel’s main point of contact with regards to Central Asia policy. Liberman’s July 2001 trip to Central Asia was actually his second official trip; the first occurred in May 1998 while he was Director General of the Prime Minister’s Office in the Netanyahu government.⁴⁰⁹ Liberman and Natan Sharansky share some striking similarities regarding their involvement in Israel’s relationship with Central Asia.

⁴⁰⁵ Blua, “Israel Emerges,” <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

⁴⁰⁶ “Information on Commercial-Economic Relations,” p. 2.

⁴⁰⁷ See “Uzbekistan, Israel Discuss Economic Cooperation,” *Eurasianet.org*, <http://www.eurasianet.org>. For additional information, see Blua, “Israel Emerges,” <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

⁴⁰⁸ “Uzbekistan-Israel: New Facets,” <http://www.mfer.uz/english/news/05&07&2001.html> (accessed 27 July 2002).

⁴⁰⁹ Sami Rozen, “Israelis To Arm Kyrgyz Commando,” *AIA*, 28 March 2006.

Both men had significant linguistic and cultural advantages because they were born in the Soviet Union and are native Russian speakers.⁴¹⁰ Furthermore, both Liberman and Sharansky have ties to Israel's sizable and important Soviet and post-Soviet immigrant community: Liberman through the political party *Yisrael Beytenu* ("Israel is our home") and Sharansky through the *Israel Ba-Aliya* ("Israel Rising") political party. The Israeli Russian-speaking community gives Israel a major advantage in doing business in the Central Asian region. As a result of these connections, Liberman and Sharansky have been *perceived* as keeping the interests of the Russian-speaking, Soviet immigrant community in mind. This has subsequently led to a *perception* in some of the states of the former Soviet Union that these men not only care about developments there, but are in a position to do something about it.

Commercial Aviation Cooperation

During this phase of the relationship commercial aviation cooperation expanded significantly. El Al became one of only eight foreign airlines operating a representative office in Tashkent and was permitted to sell tickets on El Al flights as well as a limited number of seats on those flights operated by the national airline Uzbekistan Havo Yullari.⁴¹¹ These latter flights were operated on a code sharing agreement.⁴¹² An agreement announced through *Interfax* on 26 May 2001 noted that El Al (as well as other Israeli flagged carriers) would be "serviced and fueled at Tashkent airport."⁴¹³ In a reciprocal arrangement, the aircraft of Uzbekistan Havo

⁴¹⁰ Neither of them is of Central Asian origin; Liberman emigrated from Moldova, while Sharansky was born in Ukraine.

⁴¹¹ "Israeli Airlines Opens Representative Office in Tashkent," *Interfax*, 26 May 2001.

⁴¹² Ofer Moreno (Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the State of Israel to the Republic of Uzbekistan), interview with the author, 13 March 2006, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

⁴¹³ "Israeli Airlines Opens Office."

Yullari would receive similar services at Ben-Gurion International Airport outside Tel Aviv.⁴¹⁴

The Tashkent offices of the Israeli airline Arkia are located across the street from the Israeli embassy. This one-block section of Abdullah Kahhar Street was closed to through traffic as of 2004, and is guarded by Israel security personnel and Uzbek security forces from the Ministry of Interior, National Security Service, and Tashkent militia. In addition to vehicle barriers, the Uzbek Ministry of Interior has often positioned an armored personnel carrier in the street.⁴¹⁵ The level of security accorded to the Arkia office not only demonstrates Israeli and Uzbek threat perception,⁴¹⁶ but the fact that it is protected serves as recognition that the airline office is, in a sense, a component of the Israeli presence.

In part to capitalize on the interest in flights to Israel, in March 2001 it was announced that a new Samarqand-Tel Aviv route would begin operating.⁴¹⁷ Although it was planned to operate just once a month, it is indicative of a desire to capitalize commercially on the Israeli connections with Samarqand. A significant number of Israelis and their families of Bukharan Jewish origin travel to the region to visit family and friends and spend time in the country of their forefathers.⁴¹⁸ Some Uzbek émigrés in Israel who prefer not to return to Uzbekistan often pay for their friends, family, and former neighbors to visit Israel.⁴¹⁹ A number of Israelis have also paid to bring musicians and entertainers from Uzbekistan to Israel to perform at special

⁴¹⁴ "Israeli Airlines Opens Office."

⁴¹⁵ Data in the preceding paragraph relating to security measures came through fieldwork in Tashkent over a two-and-one-half-year period (2004–2006).

⁴¹⁶ This is an important fact in light of the revelation that the suspects in the February 1999 Tashkent bombings had also surveilled the Israeli embassy. See "Uzbek TV continues reports on trial of bomb suspect – footage of trial," *Uzbek Television first channel* (Tashkent), in Uzbek, 3 June 1999, in BBC Monitoring International Reports, 3 June 1999.

⁴¹⁷ "Flights To Be Launched Between Uzbekistan, Israel, Russia," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 15 March 2001.

⁴¹⁸ Khusnidinov, interview.

⁴¹⁹ Moreno, interview. Also based on informal discussions the author had in London and Tel Aviv.

occasions such as weddings and bar or bat mitzvahs.⁴²⁰ Because it is home to one of the oldest Jewish communities in Central Asia, and because a significant Israeli community traces its origins to Samarqand and the surrounding regions, a Samarqand-Tel Aviv route was logical.⁴²¹

⁴²⁰ Moreno, interview. Also based on informal discussions the author had in London and Tel Aviv.

⁴²¹ "New air route to be opened from major Uzbek town to Israel and Russia," *Narodnoye Slovo* (Uzbekistan), n.d., and "Uzbekistan March 20 News," (2001), <http://www.uzland.uz/2001/march/20.htm> (accessed 22 June 2001).

Table 4.10 Major Israeli Projects, 1998–2001

Year	Project	Sector	Business(es) Involved	Contract size (where known)
1998	Dairy processing	Agricultural	Marav	NA
1998	Greenhouse construction project	Agricultural	<i>not known</i>	NA
1998	Irrigation assistance project	Agricultural	<i>not known</i>	NA
1998	Discussion of electric power station construction	Energy	<i>not known</i>	NA
1998	Discussion of solar power station construction	Energy	<i>not known</i>	NA
1999	Israeli Institute of Export and the Israeli Foreign Trade Risks Insurance Corporation rate Uzbekistan as the leading market for Israeli investor and businesses	NA	NA	NA
1999	Poultry processing	Agricultural	MAD	NA
1999	Industrial upgrades	Industrial	Bateman Projects, Ltd	\$300m
1999	Supply of energy consumption counters	Energy	Nisko	NA
late 1990s	Power supply contracts	Technology	Gamatronic Electronic Industries, Ltd	NA
late 1990s	Telecom access projects	Technology	RAD Data Communications	NA
late 1990s	Modems and radio access contracts	Technology	Alvarion	NA
late 1990s	Electronic and technology upgrades	Technology	K.Sh.S. Contact Ltd	NA
late 1990s	Industrial equipment	Technology	Tadiran Electronic Industries	NA
late 1990s	Fibre optic cable contracts	Technology	Optical Access	NA
2000	Molybdenum export JV in Chirchik	Industrial	Metek Metal Technology	\$19.39m
2000	Battery production with UzExide in Jizzak	Industrial	<i>not known</i>	NA
2000-01	Booster compression station at Shurtan gas condensate field	Energy	Bateman Projects, Ltd	\$192m
2001	Turnkey mining facility construction in Navoi	Industrial	Bateman Projects, Ltd	\$89m
2001	Bottled water sales	Food processing	<i>not known</i>	NA
2001	Samarqand-Tel Aviv flight agreement	Aviation	<i>not known</i>	NA
<i>unkwn.</i>	Weapons and ammunition sales	Defense	<i>not known</i>	(3% of all imports from Israel)

Sources: Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations; FBIS; BBC SWB; author's research.

Major Commercial Investment, 1998–2001

As demonstrated by table 4.10, there were a number of significant Israeli commercial projects in Uzbekistan during the last phase of the relationship to be examined in this chapter. Israeli businesses were active in the agricultural, energy, industrial, and technology sectors, and there was some activity in the food processing, aviation, and defense sectors. Also during this period, Israeli cooperation in the creation and launch of Uzbekistan's first communications satellite was discussed.⁴²² A brief examination of the more notable projects during this period follows.

There were several large-scale projects to take place during this period, including the creation of a molybdenum export joint venture, industrial upgrades at a metallurgy concern, several natural gas projects, and a project to produce batteries in cooperation with UzExide.⁴²³ The molybdenum joint venture, Uzmetall Technology, was formed in late 2000 to process and produce molybdenum for export. Molybdenum is an element frequently used in hardening steel and is often used in copper extraction and mining operations. Its other applications include usage in the manufacture of petroleum pipelines, aircraft, missile parts, and some electronic applications.⁴²⁴

Uzmetall was created as a joint venture by Israel's Metek Metal Technology, the Almalyk Mining and Metals Combine, and the Uzbek Refractory and Heat Resistant Metals Plant in Chirchik.⁴²⁵ The Chirchik joint venture (which dates back

⁴²² "Uzbekistan to announce satellite tender in May," *Uzbek Television first channel* (Tashkent), in Russian, 26 January 2000, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports* (26 January 2000).

⁴²³ "Batteries with Uzbek label," *Narodnoye Slovo* (Tashkent), in Russian, 27 April 2000, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 27 April 2000.

⁴²⁴ For more information, consult the entry on "Molybdenum," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molybdenum> (accessed 13 April 2006).

⁴²⁵ "Uzbek-Israeli JV May Start Producing Molybdenum 2001," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 14 December 2000.

to President Karimov's 1998 visit to Israel⁴²⁶) is well known as a 'tangible example' of a collaborative investment in which Uzbekistan benefits from its relations with Israel.⁴²⁷ The president of Metek Metal, A. Rosenberg, commented at the plant's opening that the joint venture would create jobs and transfer technology to Uzbekistan,⁴²⁸ both vital components for continued Uzbek economic growth and stability.

This joint venture was funded through a \$16 million credit originating from an unspecified Israeli bank;⁴²⁹ one report claimed that the Bank of Israel would subsidize the project.⁴³⁰ The total capital investment was estimated at \$19,390,000 and was planned to fully pay for itself in five years.⁴³¹ The total credit value was insured by IFTRIC and guaranteed by the Uzbek government.⁴³² Internal Uzbek government documents valued Tashkent's financial responsibility at \$17,490,000, nearly \$1.5 million more than had been publicly announced.⁴³³

A second major Israeli-Uzbek joint venture involved Haifa-based Bateman Projects Ltd, a subsidiary of Bateman Middle East, itself a major multinational firm. In late 2001 Bateman signed an agreement to deliver equipment for a turnkey project at the Navoisky Mining Metallurgical Plant. The agreement was originally valued at \$197,800,000; however, the Uzbek Association for Foreign Economic Cooperation

⁴²⁶ "New Uzbek-Israeli joint venture set up to produce molybdenum," *Uzbek Television first channel* (Tashkent), in Russian, 1430 GMT 22 February 2001, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, on *Eurasianet.org*, 22 February 2001, <http://www.eurasianet.org>.

⁴²⁷ Timur Agzamovich Alimov (Director, International Cultural Center, Republic of Uzbekistan), interview with the author, 19 October 2004, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

⁴²⁸ "New Uzbek-Israeli joint venture," <http://www.eurasianet.org>.

⁴²⁹ "Uzbek-Israeli JV will receive credit in amount of million US \$," *Kabar news agency* (Tashkent), 10 January 2001, and Abraham Rein, "New Uzbek-Israeli joint venture," <http://www.eurasianet.org>.

⁴³⁰ "Uzbek-Israeli joint venture launches 20m-dollar molybdenum project," *Uzbek radio* (Tashkent), in Uzbek, 19 February 2000, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 19 February 2000.

⁴³¹ "Uzbek-Israeli JV," and "Uzbek-Israeli JV May Start Producing Molybdenum 2001," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 14 December 2000.

⁴³² Abraham Rein, "New Uzbek-Israeli joint venture set up to produce molybdenum," *Eurasianet.org*, 23 February 2001, <http://www.eurasianet.org>.

⁴³³ Limited-circulation official Uzbek government document entitled "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the State of Israel," p. 4.

was subsequently involved and, after completing an analysis of the deal, it ruled that the contract was overvalued. The new contract value was lowered to \$89,000,000, a cut of over \$100 million. The Navoisky Mining Metallurgical Plant was expected to come up with financing in excess of \$56,000,000, while foreign credit was to cover approximately \$33,000,000. Bateman was not required to generate any of the financing for this project.⁴³⁴ This signified the desire to continue to do business with Bateman.

Israeli firms were also involved in a number of natural gas projects during the third phase of the relationship. Such projects have been second in significance only to irrigation and agricultural investments for the Uzbek economy. Nisko won a tender in 1999 to supply energy-consumption counters at the Shurtan Gas and Chemical Complex.⁴³⁵ Bateman invested in at least three of the natural gas ventures,⁴³⁶ one of which involved performing industrial upgrades for which Bateman won \$300 million Israeli government contract in 1999. Another project Bateman took on was the construction of a booster compression station at the Shurtan gas condensate field with Uzbekneftgaz (2000–2001).⁴³⁷ In 1999 Bateman won \$300 million Israeli government contract and The Shurtan facility was a vital component of Uzbekistan's strategic economic planning.⁴³⁸

Bateman's project at Shurtan called for the oversight and supervision of Uzbek workers, as well as other design, supply, and management services.⁴³⁹ The

⁴³⁴ It is critical to note that this controversy has not been publicized and the author has only become aware of it through confidential internal Uzbek government documents which were not intended for public consumption. "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 4.

⁴³⁵ "Uzbekistan & Israel."

⁴³⁶ Tal Muscal, "Bateman Middle East awarded \$160m. gas project in Uzbekistan," *The Jerusalem Post*, 26 December 2000.

⁴³⁷ "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 3. Also see "Foreign Investments in Uzbekistan in 2002," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 15 August 2002.

⁴³⁸ "Foreign Investments in Uzbekistan."

⁴³⁹ Muscal, "Bateman Middle East." Also see "Foreign Firms to Boost Uzbek Energy Sector," *Oil & Gas Journal Exchange*, 5 March 2001.

Shurtan gas condensate field is one of the largest in Uzbekistan and regularly produces in excess of 15 million cubic meters of natural gas per year,⁴⁴⁰ which is approximately 36 percent of all Uzbek natural gas.⁴⁴¹ Project estimates claimed that the Shurtan fields produce 75 percent of Uzbek domestic gas consumption and that the compressor station would extend productivity 20 years.⁴⁴²

The contract was confidentially valued at \$192,220,000, a figure largely prepaid to Bateman, thereby resulting in a substantial reduction in Bateman's exposure. The project was financed through a combination of foreign bank loans guaranteed by the Uzbek government, over \$100 million insured by the US Export-Import bank, and guaranteed by IFTRIC.⁴⁴³

There were many projects in which Bateman was involved in this period; yet not all of them were without controversy, as noted above. The difficulties Bateman encountered in their agreement to deliver equipment for the turnkey project at the Navoisky Mining Metallurgical Plant (late 2001) demonstrate several issues concerning the operation of Israeli business in Uzbekistan. The first issue is the intrusion of the government into a private sector deal and the subsequent revaluation—at a much lower contract value—after negotiations were completed and the contracts were signed. This makes all international firms, not just Israeli businesses, hesitate when it comes to doing business with Uzbekistan. If signed contracts are not honored and international legal business standards are not universally applied, then surely some international firms will think twice before trying to do business in Uzbekistan; a development, unfortunately, that we are beginning to

⁴⁴⁰ "Uzbekneftgaz signs contract with Israeli Bateman," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 1 February 2001.

⁴⁴¹ "Foreign Firms to Boost."

⁴⁴² Muscal, "Bateman Middle East."

⁴⁴³ See "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 4, Muscal, "Bateman Middle East," "Foreign Firms to Boost," and "Uzbekneftgaz signs contract with Israeli Bateman," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 1 February 2001.

observe today. Another issue raises the question of who is actually in a position to enter into binding deals—is it the Uzbek business partner, or perhaps a government functionary higher up in bureaucratic circles?

Smaller investments by Israeli firms also occurred in the food processing and technology sectors. A dairy processing joint venture was established by Marav Food Technologies and partially financed by Baraka Universal.⁴⁴⁴ This joint venture created 15 milk processing facilities in 1998 under a decree of the Council of Ministers.⁴⁴⁵ Israeli bottled water was also marketed in Uzbekistan.⁴⁴⁶ A number of Israeli hi-tech firms worked on telecom and technology expansion projects during this period, including UCD Micros, another Israeli-Uzbek joint venture.

Israeli businesses have been active in multiple layers of the Uzbek economy. Their successes in the agricultural, industrial, and technology sectors have been the result of both keen business expertise and the active support and lobbying of the Israeli government. As a result, Israel and Uzbekistan grew remarkably close during its first decade of independence. This closeness was further facilitated by former Soviet émigrés who were eager to do business in Uzbekistan and by the proactive engagement of Israeli leaders such as Sharansky and Liberman. The bilateral economic ties have had the intended, additional effect of creating greater opportunities for Israeli and Uzbek leaders to meet and discuss mutual concerns and problems, and this has drawn the two nations closer together. Thus Israel has buttressed its diplomatic overtures to Tashkent with viable commercial successes, creating even more opportunities for Israel to constructively and positively engage with Tashkent.

⁴⁴⁴ "Leasing Market in Uzbekistan," *Interfax*, 23 October 2003.

⁴⁴⁵ Decree no. 434, 1998, "Information on Commercial-Economic Relations," p. 4.

⁴⁴⁶ Adeeb Khalid, PhD (Department of History, Carleton College), discussion with the author, 3 April 2004, Princeton, New Jersey.

SECURITY COOPERATION

Of all the Central Asian republics, Uzbekistan enjoyed the closest cooperation with Israel when it came to security matters. This was a result of Israel's central objective to foster stability in Uzbekistan, described as the most geopolitically strategic state for Israel's purposes.⁴⁴⁷

During Minister of Trade and Industry Sharansky's visit to Tashkent in June of 1998, President Karimov informed him that "Uzbekistan is willing to purchase military technology from Israel."⁴⁴⁸ Karimov has also claimed that Uzbekistan faced threats similar to those that confronted Israel. Leaders in Israel and Uzbekistan agreed that terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, especially from Iran and Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, were the main concerns.⁴⁴⁹ Certainly both Israel and Uzbekistan have been fiercely anti-fundamentalist, an attitude which has helped foster the closeness between Israel and Tashkent: on numerous occasions both Israeli and Uzbek leaders have claimed that they "were united by the need to combat Islamic fundamentalism."⁴⁵⁰ The Iranian nuclear weapons program was another concern both countries shared during this time.⁴⁵¹

What little is actually known about the security cooperation between Uzbekistan and Israel is based on published reports about President Karimov's visit to Israel in September 1998. During his visit Karimov "pledged" to bring Israel and Uzbekistan closer in a "wide-ranging defense relationship" and praised the reputation of Israel's defense industry. While on a tour of Israel Aircraft Industries, Ltd,

⁴⁴⁷ Dilip Hiro, "Uzbekistan: Karimov's Visit to Israel Cements Ties," *IPS News Reports*, n.p., n.d.

⁴⁴⁸ Makovsky, "Uzbekistan may buy arms."

⁴⁴⁹ "Uzbek President Visits Israel to Promote Bilateral Ties," *The Israeli Economy: Achievements and Potential*, Israeli Ministry of Finance, September 1998.

⁴⁵⁰ "Simon Peres in Tashkent," p. 13.

⁴⁵¹ "Israeli Prime Minister in Tashkent," *RFE/RL Newslines: Transcaucasia & Central Asia*, 29 May 1998.

Karimov expressed his interest in "cooperation with IAI in a variety of fields." Among the weapons systems at IAI in which Karimov expressed interest were the Hunter unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), the Arrow anti-missile missile, ground control systems, as well as satellites.⁴⁵²

Hezbollah and Uzbekistan: A Request for Assistance

After the February 1999 bomb attacks in Tashkent, there were unsubstantiated rumors that Israeli government agencies had informed the Uzbeks that the Lebanese terrorist organization Hezbollah was responsible. Karimov declared to reporters that the perpetrators were "the same as those who are planting bombs in Israel."⁴⁵³ *The Jerusalem Post* reported two days after the bombing that Uzbekistan had asked for "Israel's help against Hezbollah."⁴⁵⁴ According to the report, Karimov requested an expansion in counter-terrorism cooperation during a telephone conversation with Natan Sharansky, the government's main unofficial point of contact on issues related to Central Asia.⁴⁵⁵ Karimov was convinced "that Hizbullah offshoots have penetrated the former Soviet Union and were sprouting up in Uzbekistan"⁴⁵⁶ and that "Islamic fundamentalism had already put down roots"⁴⁵⁷ in Uzbekistan. Reassuring Karimov of Israeli solidarity with them, Sharansky responded that the Israeli government "highly appreciated 'the courage and steadfastness' the Uzbek authorities were showing in their struggle against Muslim fanatics."⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵² Rodan, "Uzbekistan sees Israel."

⁴⁵³ "Uzbek head tells press in Kazakh capital about Tashkent blasts," *Kyrgyz Radio first program* (Bishkek), in Russian, 20 February 1999, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 20 February 1999.

⁴⁵⁴ Danna Harman, "Uzbekistan asks Israel's help against Hizbullah," *The Jerusalem Post*, 18 February 1999.

⁴⁵⁵ Harman, "Uzbekistan asks Israel's help," and "Hezbollah behind Tashkent bombs, Uzbek leader tells Israeli minister," *Itar-TASS News Agency*, 18 February 1999.

⁴⁵⁶ Harman, "Uzbekistan asks Israel's help."

⁴⁵⁷ "Hezbollah behind Tashkent bombs."

⁴⁵⁸ "Hezbollah behind Tashkent bombs."

Although an attempt by Hezbollah to assassinate the Uzbek president seems dubious at best, the news reports stating it was Israel who told Tashkent that Hezbollah was to blame are noteworthy they display the general assumption that Israel and Tashkent had been cooperating in the areas of intelligence and security. Even if there had not been any cooperation between the two states prior to the bombings, this certainly changed following the attempted assassination. It seems quite unlikely that Israel would turn down a request to render aid in efforts to combat Islamist terrorism, whether Hezbollah was active in Uzbekistan or not. Israel's counter-terrorism assistance to the Uzbeks took on increased gravity after it emerged that the bombing suspects had surveilled the Israeli embassy in Tashkent.⁴⁵⁹

Counter-Terrorism and Intelligence Coordination

Towards the end of the last phase of the relationship being examined in this chapter, Israeli-Uzbek security and intelligence cooperation had become quite significant. By 2001, Uzbekistan hosted the largest Israeli intelligence presence in the region,⁴⁶⁰ and was cooperating quite closely with Israeli authorities in combating terrorism.⁴⁶¹ Israel has been able to influence not only the republics' perception of security threats but also the appropriate steps to counter those threats. The establishment of an overt security and intelligence relationship has its origins in Karimov's September 1998 visit to Israel, when Israel and Tashkent agreed to work together in dealing with the mutually perceived Iranian threat.⁴⁶² Intelligence cooperation were reported to have been provided in the form of equipment and

⁴⁵⁹ "Uzbek TV continues reports," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 3 June 1999.

⁴⁶⁰ "Russia revives arms sales to Iran after 'burying' bargain with U.S.," *Arms Trade Newswire*, 16 January 2001, <http://www.clw.org/cat/newswire/nw011601.html> (accessed 13 June 2001), quoting from the *Mideast Mirror*, 15 January 2001.

⁴⁶¹ Yossi Melman, "Panel sets new guidelines on roles of Shin Bet and Mossad," *Ha'aretz*, 18 October 2000.

⁴⁶² *Israel Yearbook & Almanac 1999*, Volume 53 (Jerusalem, 1999), p. 77.

training, as well as by other assistance.⁴⁶³ Israel's security cooperation with Uzbekistan was highlighted in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States when Israel offered the United States intelligence regarding Uzbekistan,⁴⁶⁴ and Israel helped Washington with an intelligence operation in Uzbekistan during the preparations for the war in Afghanistan that overthrew the Taliban.⁴⁶⁵

Many critics of Israel and Uzbekistan have attacked this cooperation. Those that object to the policies of either country, it seems, naturally assume that because both Israel and Uzbekistan have been actively engaged in fighting terrorism, there must be some clandestine coordination and cooperation between Israel and Tashkent. This assumption is further strengthened by extrapolating from the apparently close ties which exist between the two nations in other areas to include the area of security cooperation. These allegations would not be made if Israel and Uzbekistan did not already have obviously close cooperation in many other areas. As such, the allegations of military or intelligence conspiracies only underscore the strength of the Israeli-Uzbek relationship.

UZBEKISTAN AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT: UNDERSTANDING THE CONFLICT

Uzbek media rarely reported on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the al-Aqsa Intifadah. Unlike in most 'Muslim' nations, there are few—if any—television images

⁴⁶³ "Israel asks For Uzbekistan's Assistance to Fight Terrorism," *IsraelWire*, n.d., <http://www.uzbekistanerk.org/3en100900.html> (accessed 22 June 2001).

⁴⁶⁴ Janine Zacharia, "Israel supplies US with Central Asia intelligence," *The Jerusalem Post*, 5 October 2001.

⁴⁶⁵ "Israel TV says Sharon offended at being 'cuckolded' by USA, Arabs," *Israel TV Channel 1* (Jerusalem), in Hebrew, 5 October 2001, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports—Middle East*, 5 October 2001.

of the Palestinians.⁴⁶⁶ Most Uzbeks did not have access to satellite television or internet service; those who did generally followed the Russian-language media which report more frequently on the conflict in Chechnya rather than that in the Palestinian Territories. The major international Arabic-language satellite stations like *al-Jazeera* do not have much of a market share in Uzbekistan because few people understand Arabic, and even fewer are interested in the viewpoints that these stations are believed to advance.⁴⁶⁷ As a result, Uzbeks generally tend to have a different perception of the conflict in Israel and the Palestinian Territories than members of other 'Muslim' states do. Rarely if ever is the use of violence by any side ever justified: most Uzbeks feel that "terror is terror."⁴⁶⁸ The position of the Uzbek government is that Israel has a right to exist peacefully and to defend itself.⁴⁶⁹

Within Uzbekistan, the Islamist opposition has used the language of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to describe the battle it views itself waging against the Uzbek state. Contributing to this violent situation is the support that the Uzbek Jewish community gives to the Karimov regime. Tashkent Jewish community leader Marek Fazilov commented that "all local Jews side with President Karimov."⁴⁷⁰ The Islamist opposition have referred to President Karimov as a "Zionist Jew" and to his government as the "oppressive Zionist regime of Islam Karimov."⁴⁷¹ The use of such inflammatory language has created and helped perpetuate the view that the interests of

⁴⁶⁶ Based on interviews conducted in Tashkent, Uzbekistan with Zahidulla Munavvarov, PhD (Chairman of the al-Imam al-Bukhari Scientific and Educational Center, Tashkent; MP, Republic of Uzbekistan), 5 and 13 October 2004; Shoazim Minovarov, PhD (Chairman of the Committee of Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers, Republic of Uzbekistan), 13 October 2004; and Khusnidinov, interview, 18 October 2004.

⁴⁶⁷ Based on interviews conducted in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, October 2004.

⁴⁶⁸ Minovarov, interview.

⁴⁶⁹ Khusnidinov, interview.

⁴⁷⁰ Lev Gorodetsky, "Some Jews in Central Asia Worry as War Rages and Islam Grows," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 22 October 2002.

⁴⁷¹ Col. Jonathan Fighel (ret.), "Jihad in Uzbekistan: Suicide bombings spread to Uzbekistan," special report of the International Counter-Terrorism Center (Herzilya, Israel), 30 March 2004. Document in the collection of the author.

the current Uzbek regime are the same as Israel's. Furthermore, because the Islamist opposition believes that Israel supports the Karimov regime. Israel and the Karimov regime itself have become interchangeable and inseparable in their view.⁴⁷² A spokesman for the underground militant movement Hizb-ut Tahrir, in an interview with the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, stated "[w]e are very much opposed to the Jews and Israel—we don't want to kill the Jews but they must leave Central Asia. The United States is the enemy of Islam with the Jews."⁴⁷³ This perception began to spread towards the end of the third phase of the relationship and has come to have an impact on the Israeli-Uzbek relationship.

POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF THE ISLAMIST OPPOSITION: ANTI-ISRAEL

Throughout most of the late 1990s, the Uzbek government perceived major security threats not just from neighboring civil war-ravaged Tajikistan and Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, but also from what the regime in Tashkent has labeled 'Wahhabi Islamist radicals.'⁴⁷⁴ In the former Soviet territories, the term 'Wahhabi' has been used to refer to all Islamist radicals in general. In Uzbekistan, however, the term more specifically implies that those in question have received part of their motivation, funding, and experience abroad, most often in the Arab Gulf.⁴⁷⁵ As evidence of a threat from 'Wahhabi' Islamist radicals, Uzbek authorities claimed to have obtained materials written in Arabic,⁴⁷⁶ a language little spoken or understood in Uzbekistan.

⁴⁷² Based upon discussions with an political observer held in Uzbekistan, October 2004.

⁴⁷³ Ahmed Rashid, "Only Allah Knows," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 November 2000, available at http://www.feer.com/_0011_09/p030region.html (accessed 5 April 2001).

⁴⁷⁴ See Kate Goldberg, "Uzbekistan voices security concerns," *BBC World Monitoring*, 19 November 1999; "Jews in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan live in Muslim World," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 17 March 2003.

⁴⁷⁵ Fighel, "Jihad in Uzbekistan." Also based upon field research conducted by the author in Uzbekistan in October 2004.

⁴⁷⁶ "Uzbekistan's window of opportunity," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 27 July 2005.

Nearly every Islamist organization—even those that have nothing to do with the Palestinian issue—make anti-Israeli statements and use the issue to build popular support. It is as though Uzbek Islamist political oppositionist organizations (including both those in Uzbekistan and those based in the region) can increase their credentials by taking anti-Israeli positions. The security situation from an Israeli perspective thus becomes exponentially more complex because of the vast number of groups and organizations that must be monitored in order to guard against the possibility that one group may someday make good on its rhetoric. This has contributed to greater Israeli intelligence collection efforts regarding Uzbekistan.⁴⁷⁷

For instance, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) repeatedly made statements against the government in Tashkent that were vehemently anti-Israeli. The IMU has accused the Uzbek government of carrying out Israel's policies⁴⁷⁸ and of allowing Israel to attempt to enslave Uzbeks, plunder their wealth, create military bases in Uzbekistan, kidnap pious Muslims, and secure a predominant position for Jews in Uzbek society.⁴⁷⁹ IMU founder Tohir Yoldoshev has repeatedly denounced Israel as anti-Muslim and denounced what he perceived as Israel's support for the Uzbek government.⁴⁸⁰ These statements were made on Iranian radio and actually worked in Israel's interests: Teheran's broadcasts of the IMU's messages instigating the overthrow of the Karimov government on government radio—in Uzbek—towards Uzbekistan and the rest of Central Asia made the Iranian government appear to be a

⁴⁷⁷ Janine Zacharia, "Israel supplies US with Central Asia intelligence," *The Jerusalem Post*, 5 October 2001. Also see Fighel, "Jihad in Uzbekistan."

⁴⁷⁸ "Uzbek Islamic Movement: government must go or be removed by force," *Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Mashhad), in Uzbek, 19 March 1999, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 19 March 1999.

⁴⁷⁹ "Uzbek Islamic movement says current regime putting 'fear' into people," *Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Mashhad), in Uzbek, 11 April 1999, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 11 April 1999.

⁴⁸⁰ "Uzbek opposition leader on establishing an Islamic state – Iranian Radio," *Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Mashhad), in Uzbek, 18 May 1999, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, 18 May 1999.

destabilizing force, thus inadvertently increasing Uzbekistan's cooperation with Israel in their battle against Iranian influence.

ANALYSIS OF UZBEKISTAN'S UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTES

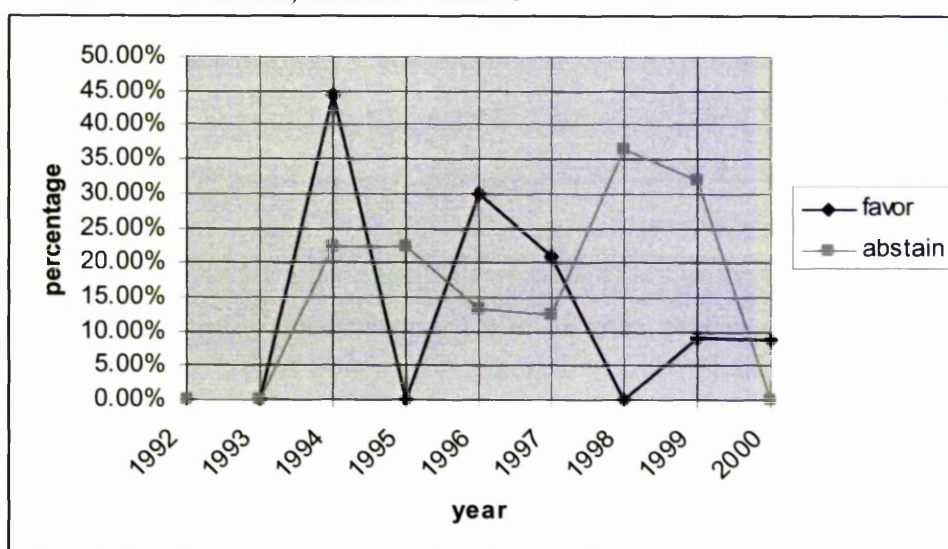
Uzbekistan has been one of the staunchest supporters of Israel in the United Nations General Assembly. In fact, other than the United States and sometimes Micronesia and the Marshall Islands, Uzbekistan is often the only other nation to vote with Israel on many of the UN's most divisive issues. During the first ten years of independence, Uzbekistan's voting record in the UN General Assembly has served as a strong indicator of its vigorous pro-Israeli and pro-Western stance, given the fact that most other Muslim nations often vote against Israel. Tashkent's decision to place its pro-Israel interest ahead of any pressure to participate in Muslim solidarity was a vivid demonstration of the importance Uzbekistan placed on its relationship with Israel, and it exemplified the lengths to which Tashkent went in order protect this crucial relationship. The Israeli Foreign Ministry has noted that Uzbekistan often takes "Israeli positions into account and their votes are (usually) favorable to Israel."⁴⁸¹

An analysis of Uzbekistan's voting record on General Assembly resolutions related to the Middle East and considered hostile to Israel that were passed during the time period covered in this chapter demonstrates the successes of Israel's policy of constructive engagement. Over the course of the Israeli-Uzbek relationship, Uzbekistan's voting pattern changed. The general frequency with which the Uzbek delegation voted in favor of resolutions critical of Israel decreased over the period examined in this chapter (see table 4.11 and chart 4.2). This was the result of a

⁴⁸¹ "Ministry of Foreign Affairs," <http://www.israel.org/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0gb10> (accessed 5 March 2001).

change in Uzbekistan's position on resolutions considered hostile to Israel. Also during the period examined the frequency with which the Uzbek delegation cast abstentions on these resolutions increased. This suggests that through its relationship with Uzbekistan, Israel created a strong bond with Tashkent and was successful in orienting Uzbek policy to align with Israel's interests.

Chart 4.2 Uzbek Voting Frequency in favor of UN General Assembly Resolutions Related to the Middle East Considered Hostile to Israel, and Abstentions



Sources: UN Bibliographic Information System; American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise.

The Uzbek delegation's voting pattern is unusual in several respects. First, for the initial two years of Uzbekistan's membership in the UN, the Uzbek delegation cast no votes on issues related to the Middle East. This is an exception to the behavior of most states because the issues related to the Middle East and the Palestinian Authority are some of the most divisive in the UN General Assembly, and thus the most heavily voted. In the following years, the Uzbek delegation often continued this practice, as shown in table 4.11. On occasions where no vote was registered it cannot be known with certainty whether or not the Uzbek delegation was

present for the vote. However, in several cases (from 1994 onwards) circumstantial evidence exists to

Table 4.11 Uzbek Voting Frequency of UN General Assembly Resolutions Related to the Middle East Considered Hostile to Israel

Year	Occurrence of No Vote Cast	Percentage of No Vote Cast	Occurrence of Vote In Favor	Percentage of Vote In Favor	Occurrence of Vote Against	Percentage of Vote Against	Occurrence of Abstention	Percentage of Abstention
1992	27 of 27	100.00%	0 of 27	0.00%	0 of 27	0.00%	0 of 27	0.00%
1993	11 of 11	100.00%	0 of 11	0.00%	0 of 11	0.00%	0 of 11	0.00%
1994	3 of 9	33.33%	4 of 9	44.44%	0 of 9	0.00%	2 of 9	22.22%
1995	7 of 9	77.77%	0 of 9	0.00%	0 of 9	0.00%	2 of 9	22.22%
1996	17 of 30	56.66%	9 of 30	30.00%	0 of 30	0.00%	4 of 30	13.33%
1997*	15 of 24	62.50%	5 of 24	20.83%	0 of 24	0.00%	3 of 24	12.50%
1998	14 of 22	63.63%	0 of 22	0.00%	0 of 22	0.00%	8 of 22	36.36%
1999	13 of 21	61.90%	1 of 21	4.76%	0 of 21	0.00%	7 of 21	33.33%
2000	20 of 23	86.95%	3 of 23	13.04%	0 of 23	0.00%	0 of 23	0.00%

Sources: UN Bibliographic Information System; American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise.

* According to Article 19, Uzbekistan was ineligible to vote for part of 1997 because it was two full years worth of contributions in arrears.

suggest that the Uzbeks chose not to vote, such as on those occasions when votes were recorded either before or after the resolution in question. The second unusual factor in the Uzbek voting pattern has to do with how Uzbekistan cast its abstentions. In most cases, a delegation would abstain when it wanted to be counted for the quorum but did not want to cast a vote either in favor or against a resolution. Alternatively, some nations cast abstentions when they disagreed with a resolution, but not strongly enough to warrant voting against it. The data examined for this thesis, however, suggests that the Uzbek delegation cast abstentions when they did not want to go as far as to vote *in favor* of a resolution. This subtle difference may help to explain the patterns that emerge in the analysis of Uzbekistan's position on the General Assembly. Ultimately, this slight difference mattered little to Israel because the abstentions were not votes in favor of hostile resolutions. Thus Uzbekistan may have been exercising voting subtleties for the benefit of nations other than Israel, such as those in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Nonaligned Movement (NAM).

PHASE I: 1991–1994

During the 47th and 48th Sessions of the General Assembly, the first two sessions in which Uzbekistan was a member of the UN, the Uzbek delegation cast no votes on General Assembly resolutions related to the Middle East considered hostile to Israel (see table 4.11). It is not known whether the Uzbek delegation was not present for the vote or simply chose not to vote on these resolutions.

During the 49th Session in 1994, Uzbekistan voted in favor of four of nine resolutions hostile to Israel, while casting two abstentions, and not voting at all on the other three resolutions. This was the only time during the period examined in this

chapter that the Uzbek delegation voted to condemn Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories (A/RES/49/132). The three resolutions on which the Uzbek delegation cast no vote involved the Middle East peace process, Jerusalem, and the Golan.

PHASE II: 1995–1997

During the 50th Session in 1995, out of nine resolutions considered hostile to Israel that passed, the Uzbek delegation voted in favor of none, and cast two abstentions. The abstentions were cast on resolutions highlighting the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East (A/RES/50/73) and the right of Palestinian self-determination (A/RES/50/140). No votes were cast the other seven resolutions, which involved measures on Israeli settlements, the peace process, Jerusalem, the Golan, and Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories. It is not known whether the Uzbek delegation was present for those votes or not.

In 1996, Uzbekistan voted in favor of nine out of 30 resolutions passed in the General Assembly, and abstained four times. The Uzbek delegation voted to extend assistance to Palestinian refugees (A/RES/51/124, A/RES/51/126, A/RES/51/127, A/RES/51/128, and A/RES/51/130) and to call on Israel to apply the Geneva Conventions in the Occupied Territories (A/RES/51/11332). Uzbekistan also voted for the first time to investigate Israeli human rights practices (A/RES/51/134), to call on Israel to evacuate the Golan (A/RES/51/135), and in favor of Palestinian sovereignty in the Occupied Territories (A/RES/51/190). On the risk on nuclear proliferation, the Uzbek delegation abstained (A/RES/51/48).⁴⁸² The Uzbek

⁴⁸² The three other resolutions on which the Uzbek delegation cast no vote were resolutions affirming the Palestinian Right of Self-Determination (A/RES/51/82); a resolution on Palestinian Refugees (A/RES/51/129); and a resolution critical of Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories (A/RES/51/131).

delegation cast no ballot on 17 resolutions, and continued to not vote on the issues of the peace process, Israeli settlements, and Jerusalem.

Of 24 resolutions hostile to Israel passed in the General Assembly in 1997, Uzbekistan voted in favor of only five. During this session, Uzbekistan voted for the first time in favor of the resolution citing Israel as a risk to nuclear proliferation in the Middle East (A/RES/52/41). The other four votes concerned administrative matters in the UN General Assembly regarding the issue of Palestine (A/RES/52/49, A/RES/52/50, and A/RES/52/51) and a resolution calling for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian Question (A/RES/52/52). The Uzbek delegation cast no other votes, but circumstantial evidence suggests that the Uzbek delegation was present for votes on the status of Jerusalem (A/RES/52/53) and the Golan (A/RES/52/54), and opted not to vote. Significantly, on the two Emergency Special Session resolutions critical of Israeli actions in East Jerusalem and the Occupied Territories (A/RES/51/ES/10-3 and A/RES/51/ES/10-4), the Uzbek delegation abstained. Uzbekistan lost the right to vote under Article 19 because Tashkent was two full years behind in the payment of its contributions; however, this affected only one vote examined in this study.

During this phase of the Israeli-Uzbek relationship, Uzbekistan's voting pattern shifted. On the issue of censuring Israel as a risk to nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, the Uzbek delegation went from abstaining to voting in favor of the resolution. The Uzbeks also voted in favor of resolutions to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees, to apply the Geneva Conventions, to criticize Israeli human rights practices, and to call for an immediate withdrawal from the Golan.

PHASE III: 1998–2001

Beginning in 1998 with the 53rd Session the general frequency with which the Uzbek delegation voted in favor of UN General Assembly resolutions hostile to Israel dropped significantly. This corresponds with the renewed activity seen in the Israeli-Uzbek relationship. In the 53rd Session, Uzbekistan voted in favor of none of the 22 resolutions related to the Middle East considered hostile to Israel. During the same session, the Uzbek delegation abstained eight times on resolutions that included Jerusalem (A/RES/53/37) and the Golan (A/RES/53/38). They also abstained on the General Assembly procedural resolution related to the issue of Palestine, on which Uzbekistan had previously voted in favor (A/RES/53/39, A/RES/53/40, and A/RES/53/41). Abstentions were also cast on resolutions calling for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian Question (A/RES/53/42), the right of Palestinian self-determination (A/RES/53/136), and Palestinian sovereignty over natural resources in the Occupied Territories (A/RES/53/196). In the aftermath of Israel's re-engagement with Uzbekistan, the Uzbek delegation's voting pattern shifted to reflect a pro-Israeli bias. Despite President Karimov's statements to Arafat while visiting Ramallah in September 1998 that Uzbekistan was supportive of Palestinian rights, the Uzbek delegation in the General Assembly did not vote in favor of any resolutions related to Palestinian rights. They cast no vote at all on 14 resolutions.

Of the 22 resolutions passed in the General Assembly that were hostile to Israel in the 54th Session, Uzbekistan only voted in favor of two (one of which was the right to Palestinian self-determination), and cast seven abstentions. As in the 53rd Session, Uzbekistan again abstained on resolutions related to Jerusalem (A/RES/54/37) and the Golan (A/RES/54/38), the procedural resolutions regarding Palestine (A/RES/54/39, A/RES/54/40, and A/RES/54/41), and resolutions endorsing

a peaceful solution to the Palestinian Question (A/RES/54/42) and Palestinian sovereignty over natural resources in the Occupied Territories (A/RES/54/230). The Uzbek delegation did not vote at all on 13 resolutions.

During the 55th Session of the UN General Assembly—the last to be examined in this study—the Uzbek delegation voted in favor of three out of 23 resolutions related to the Middle East considered hostile to Israel. Uzbekistan voted (for the second time) in favor of citing Israel as a risk to nuclear proliferation in the Middle East (A/RES/55/36). They voted in favor of Palestinian self-determination (A/RES/55/87) and sovereignty over natural resources (A/RES/55/209), a departure from their usual practice of abstaining from such resolutions. No abstentions were cast in 2000. The Uzbek delegation did not cast votes on 20 of the 23 resolutions hostile to Israel, resolutions which covered issues such as the status of Jerusalem, the occupation of the Golan, application of the Geneva Conventions, Israeli settlements, Palestinian human rights, and assistance to the Palestinians.

During the third phase of the relationship, Uzbekistan's voting pattern visibly softened on resolutions related to the Middle East considered hostile to Israel. Over the course of this three-year period, the Uzbeks went from abstaining on the status of Jerusalem and the Golan to casting no vote at all. Tashkent's position on the resolution calling for a peaceful settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also followed this pattern. Similar patterns can be seen on resolutions related to the issue of Palestine in the General Assembly. On resolutions related to the Committee on the Exercise of Palestinian Rights, the Division for Palestinian Rights, and the Special Information Program for Palestine, Uzbekistan's votes went from abstentions to no ballot cast. In shifting from abstaining on the issue to not casting a ballot on all these

issues, the Uzbek delegation did not participate in the quorum, and therefore lowered the total number of votes registered.

OVERVIEW OF UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTES

Over the course of Israel's relationship with Uzbekistan examined in this chapter, Uzbekistan's voting frequency in the UN General Assembly on resolutions related to the Middle East considered hostile to Israel shows a downward trend. This coincided with the emergence of an independent Uzbek foreign policy, yet the two were not in conflict. Throughout the 1990s, as Uzbekistan gained more experience in independent governance, Uzbek foreign policy was increasingly being made in Tashkent, for the advancement of Uzbek national goals. Uzbekistan displayed a conservative voting record in the General Assembly and sought to maintain its positive relations with Israel. The Uzbek delegation's voting record in the UN General Assembly suggests that as Tashkent's relationship was improving with Israel, the frequency with which the Uzbek delegation voted in favor of resolutions hostile to Israel decreased and the frequency with which they abstained or cast no vote on those resolutions increased. Uzbekistan's voting behavior on these resolutions indicates that over the course of the period examined in this thesis, Uzbekistan increasingly supported Israel's position by not voting or abstaining on resolutions considered hostile to Israel. In the ten years examined in this chapter, constructive engagement with Uzbekistan thus yielded benefits to Israel in the international arena.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of the first decade of Uzbek independence, Israel created a strong and close relationship with Uzbekistan through diplomacy and development

assistance, economic and commercial relations, and security cooperation. This relationship was borne by Israel's drive to improve its national security and advance its traditional foreign policy goals. Israel was successful despite a period of decreased attention and diverted energies that lasted several years. Through constructive engagement Israel helped ensure a stable and secular Uzbekistan, which shared its view of regional threats and was closely aligned with Israeli interests. Uzbekistan did not devolve into an Islamist state, nor did it fall under the influence of Iran. Uzbekistan was able to maintain a very balanced approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, occasionally voicing support for Palestine while firmly voting with Israel in the United Nations.

During the first phase of the relationship, Israel provided essential support to the new nation and helped ease some of the hardships of independence. Uzbekistan did not pursue Islam as a unifying national ideology; Iran and other Muslim nations were treated with suspicion by Tashkent. These nations were welcome to invest, but their ideologies were to be left at home. The Uzbek Jewish community was allowed to make Aliyah, and those that chose to remain were never subjected to persecution. As the international community and the Arab and Muslim world welcomed Israel's establishment of relations with the Palestinians and as Israel made peace with Jordan, the policies of constructing diplomatic bridges beyond Israel's Arab neighborhood seemed to matter less in Israeli security policy. In short, Israel no longer needed non-Arab Muslim Uzbekistan as urgently as it had previously.

Believing that its security situation was improving, Israel diverted energy from the relationship with Uzbekistan and refocused it on issues closer to home. Although the Israeli-Uzbek seemed to reach a plateau in 1995, the Uzbeks continued to view their relationship with Israel as useful and worthwhile. As a result, the relationship

did not suffer from Israel's inattention. When problems developed in the peace process and normalization with the Arab states did not continue, Israel returned to building the relationship with Uzbekistan in the third phase. Interaction with Tashkent demonstrated that Israel could and did benefit from ties with non-Arab Muslim states. Among other benefits, their relationship worked to combat Israel's anti-Muslim image, and it sent a message to Israel's Arab neighbors that Israel would engage with them on Israel's schedule, and not before.

This chapter has shown that Israel's pursuit of national security and friendly relations with Uzbekistan resulted in a complex and dynamic relationship. The opportunity to create a mutually beneficial relationship with a Muslim state had long been a priority for Israel. Through such a relationship, Israel improved its own national security. Because Uzbekistan is the area's most geopolitically strategic country, Israel's achievements there were a victory for Israeli policy throughout the region.

The extent of Israel's influence in Uzbekistan ensured that Tashkent did not align itself against the State of Israel and its interests. When the Central Asian republics first got their independence, Israel moved quickly to secure its own national security objectives by engaging the republics in a variety of ways. Israel was very successful with Uzbekistan: both nations took the same stance on Iranian influence, both saw threats to their security similarly, Israel ensured the neutrality of this non-Arab 'Muslim' state on the issues surrounding Palestine, and the relationship between Jewish Israel and 'Muslim' Uzbekistan turned out to be mutually beneficial on many levels. While the victories of Israeli policy in Uzbekistan were significant, the achievements in neighboring Kazakhstan were even more dramatic.

CHAPTER FIVE: ISRAEL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH KAZAKHSTAN, 1991-1995

Israel was driven to engage Kazakhstan out of fear that it might devolve into a nation hostile to Israeli interests. The presence of nuclear weapons, Kazakhstan's position on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and a fear of Iranian influence in the region led Israel to reach out to and engage Kazakhstan. Over the course of the relationship examined in this thesis, Israel nurtured the development of a solid and multifaceted relationship with Kazakhstan designed to ensure that Kazakhstan would not align against Israeli interests. These actions prevented Israel's fears from materializing and the two states grew close through their cooperation and coordination.

This chapter will demonstrate the extent of Israeli-Kazakh relations through an analysis of the diplomatic relations, economic relations and development assistance, and security cooperation that existed between the two states. During the first phase, from 1991 through 1995, the relationship grew rapidly from none at all and expanded to cover political, economic, and security relations. It was in this period that Israel provided significant development assistance to newly independent Kazakhstan, and the nuclear dimension in the security relationship was removed from the equation. The elimination of the nuclear dimension, which was Israel's greatest concern, also marked a reduction in Israeli attention to Kazakhstan as will be demonstrated in the following chapter. It is important to note that as detailed in the following chapter, the Israeli-Kazakh relationship did not devolve in the second phase of the relationship.

PHASE I, 1991–1995: RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS

In order to ensure that Kazakhstan did not align against Israeli interests, Israel engaged Kazakhstan in multiple areas. The first phase of the relationship was dominated by Israeli fears that Kazakhstan would emerge as a state hostile to Israeli national security interests. This fear was most manifest in the areas of nuclear proliferation, Kazakhstan's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and potential rise of Iranian-inspired Islamist radicalism. Israeli policy focused upon the neutralization of these threats. To achieve these goals, Israel responded to the collapse of the Soviet Union and sought to engage Kazakhstan quickly through diplomacy, economic and commercial relations, development assistance, and security cooperation. During this first phase of the relationship, there were a number of official and working visits between the two nations. A large number of agreements were reached between Israel and Kazakhstan. As a result, the Israelis provided valuable international support and stability to newly independent Kazakhstan.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Of all the new republics in Central Asia, Kazakhstan, was a state of particular state of concern for Israeli policy makers because of its Soviet nuclear legacy. Only one year into the Israeli-Kazakh relationship, Robert Freedman identified Kazakhstan as "the most important target for Israeli diplomacy" and he was proven correct in his claim that "Israel scored its most important political success"⁴⁸³ in Kazakhstan. Israeli policymakers especially sought to support Kazakh independence as a secular

⁴⁸³ Robert O. Freedman, "Israel and Central Asia: A Preliminary Analysis," *Central Asia Monitor*, no. 2 (1993): p. 17, citing Judy Siegel, *The Jerusalem Post*, 13 January 1992.

Muslim state.⁴⁸⁴ It was feared that Kazakhstan, with its strategic weapons and significant mineral resources, would emerge opposed to the State of Israel and align with the rejectionist front of 'hard-line' Arab states.

Creating positive relations with Kazakhstan was a critical diplomatic objective for Israel in part because Almaty was interpreted as having a "'special responsibility'... to steer the new republics away from Islamic fundamentalism and Iranian influence."⁴⁸⁵ This led Israeli Ambassador Ben-Tziyon Karmel to state in remarks at a Kazakh Supreme Soviet reception that "Kazakhstan occupies a special place" in Israeli foreign policy.⁴⁸⁶ It was essential for Israel to secure Kazakhstan's position rapidly on a number of issues of concern to Israeli policy: nuclear proliferation, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the containment of Iranian ambitions in the region, and positive and open diplomatic and trade relations. This last point was and is vital to Israeli perceptions of national security, as discussed in chapter two: true peace and security arise out of total, complete, and full relations, and not simply a cold peace typified by the absence of hostilities.

Prelude to Relations: Arafat's 1991 Visit to Almaty

Despite Israel's security concerns in Kazakhstan and the need for haste, the Palestinian leadership was the first to reach out to the Kazakhs. On 23 December 1991, PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat arrived in the Kazakh capital of Almaty,⁴⁸⁷ en

⁴⁸⁴ Andrey Vasilyevich Fedorchenko, "Kazakhstan-Israel: Ways of Economic Rapprochement," <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001, site discontinued).

⁴⁸⁵ Dilip Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhammad: The Changing Face of Central Asia* (London, 1995), p. 121, quoting President Nazarbayev speaking in Austria, February 1992, *Radio Free Europe Daily Report*, 4 February 1992.

⁴⁸⁶ Gennadiy Kulagin, "Israeli Ambassador Speaks With Parliament Chairman," *Itar-TASS*, in English, 1956 GMT 22 June 1993, in FBIS-CE-93 (23 June 1993), p. 43.

⁴⁸⁷ "PLO chairman in Alma-Ata," *TASS*, 23 December 1991, in *British Broadcasting Corporation, Summary of World Broadcasts* (hereafter *BBC SWB*) SU/1263 i[8] (24 December 1991).

route from a visit to Hanoi, Vietnam.⁴⁸⁸ One of the first international leaders to visit newly independent Kazakhstan,⁴⁸⁹ Arafat arrived before Israel had recognized Kazakhstan's independence.

Arafat's objective was to gain Kazakh recognition of Palestine and he also urged Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to support the Palestinian cause within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).⁴⁹⁰ Arafat proved to be successful in getting Kazakhstan—the largest of the newly independent Central Asian republics—to recognize Palestine before the Israelis had even recognized sovereign Kazakhstan: the Kazakh recognition of Palestine occurred *two days before* Israel recognized the independence of Kazakhstan. According to a 24 December 1991 report on the Palestinian news agency *WAFA*, Kazakhstan accorded “official and complete recognition”⁴⁹¹ to Palestinian statehood during Arafat's stopover. On 5 January 1992 Nabil Amr, the Palestinian Ambassador in Moscow, confirmed that Nazarbayev had extended recognition to Palestine. In speaking with *Moskovskiye Novosti*, Amr stated that during the meeting an “agreement was reached on exchanging ambassadors”⁴⁹² which was subsequently implemented.

On 15 November 1988 the Palestine National Council had declared the establishment of an independent “State of Palestine” with Arafat as its president.⁴⁹³ This status was recognized by 91 of the 110 nations which had diplomatic relations with the PLO. As such, Nazarbayev's recognition of Palestine and Arafat was hardly

⁴⁸⁸ “Nazarbayev reportedly ‘surprised’ at Yasir Arafat's visit to Kazakhstan,” *Moskovskiye Novosti* (Moscow), in Russian, no. 1, 5 January 1992, in *BBC SWB*, SU/1274 A4/1[1] (10 January 1992).

⁴⁸⁹ “US attempts to influence Muslim republics: Effort aims to sway areas toward West,” *The Baltimore Sun*, 16 January 1992.

⁴⁹⁰ Carol R. Saivetz, “Central Asia: Emerging Relations with the Arab States and Israel,” in *Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects*, ed. Hafeez Malik (London, 1994), p. 315.

⁴⁹¹ “Kazakhstan and the State of Palestine exchange recognitions,” *TAP* (Palestine), in Arabic, 1140 GMT 24 December 1991, in *BBC SWB*, SU/1271 A4/1[1] (7 January 1992).

⁴⁹² “Nazarbayev reportedly ‘surprised’,” *BBC SWB*, SU/1274 A4/1[1].

⁴⁹³ Dilip Hiro, *The Essential Middle East: A Comprehensive Guide* (New York, 2003), s.v. “Palestine Liberation Organization,” pp. 402-405.

exceptional. During Chairman Arafat's brief visit to Almaty, Nazarbayev recognized Arafat as the president of Palestine and the two leaders agreed to develop further political, economic, and cultural cooperation between Kazakhstan and Palestine.⁴⁹⁴ Nonetheless, until the September 1993 signing of the Declaration of Principles both Israel and the United States regarded the PLO as a terrorist organization, despite the PLO's designation by the United Nations as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Contemporaneous reports reveal that Arafat's first visit to Almaty was in fact not very different than Nazarbayev's pending interactions with the Israelis. While Nazarbayev was reported by *Moskovskiy Novosti* as being "surprised" by Arafat's one-day stopover in Almaty on 23 December 1991, he shrewdly maintained his neutrality with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Arafat was not accorded a top-level reception worthy of a visiting head of state, and it was noted at the time that "Kazakhstan's top political circles did not entirely share" Arafat's "brotherly" perception of the visit. Rather than at the Presidential Palace, the Nazarbayev-Arafat meeting took place in the Supreme Soviet building, included few advisors from either side, and lasted "exactly one hour."⁴⁹⁵ Although it is not known exactly what was said in their meeting, media reports of their discussion indicate that Nazarbayev listened politely to Arafat while in reality he conceded very little to the Palestinians. The exchange of recognition and statements of intent to further develop relations are not unusual nor do they convey that any special affinity existed between Kazakhstan and Palestine. Nazarbayev and his advisors appear to have conducted a formal introductory diplomatic discussion in keeping with Soviet-era practice.

⁴⁹⁴ "Kazakhstan and State of Palestine," in *BBC SWB*, SU/1271 A4/1[1].

⁴⁹⁵ "Nazarbayev reportedly 'surprised'," *BBC SWB*, SU/1274 A4/1[1].

While the diplomatic overtures were not unexpected, they were cause for concern for Israel. In spite of the 1988 Palestine National Council declaration and Arafat's 14 December 1988 address to the UN General Assembly in which he renounced violence and accepted co-existence with Israel⁴⁹⁶—on both occasions Arafat and the PLO renounced violence and accepted coexistence with Israel—Arafat gave Nazarbayev a gift which belied the Palestinian's stance regarding Israel. Nazarbayev was given a ceremonial sword whose handle was inlaid with mother-of-pearl designs featuring Palestinian flags, a representation of the al-Aqsa mosque, and an outline of a State of Palestine which covered the entire territory of Israel and the Occupied Territories.⁴⁹⁷ While Arafat spoke with Nazarbayev about the importance of Palestinian sovereignty and coexistence with Israel, the gift he left behind tells a separate story. Arafat's decision to present a gift to the Kazakh president which denied Israel's right to exist confirmed the fears that the Palestinians sought to exclude the Israelis from any sort of relationship with the central Asian republics.

After the meeting it emerged that Arafat had conveyed to Nazarbayev that he perceived Kazakhstan to be part of the Middle East. Arafat was also reported to have told Nazarbayev that as part of the Middle East, war could easily spread throughout the region and Kazakhstan would then be subjected to Israeli missile attacks.⁴⁹⁸ According to Arafat's geopolitical interpretations, independent Kazakhstan was now embroiled in the Middle East conflict. This was an attempt to draw Kazakh support for the Arab position against Israel. Arafat's visit and the statements that were made during his very brief meeting with Nazarbayev clearly demonstrated that the

⁴⁹⁶ Arafat's address was given to a special session of the General Assembly convened in Geneva; see Hiro, *Essential Middle East*, s.v. "Arafat," pp. 45-48, and "Palestine Liberation Organization," pp. 402-405.

⁴⁹⁷ This gift is on display at the Central State Museum in Almaty, observed by the author on 26 January 2005 during field research in Kazakhstan.

⁴⁹⁸ "Nazarbayev reportedly 'surprised'," *BBC SWB*, SU/1274 A4/1[1].

Palestinians were doing exactly as the Israelis had feared they would: get to the region first and secure Kazakh backing for the Palestinian perspective. The Palestinians sought to be the first to present their viewpoint hoping to gain Kazakh support against the Israeli occupation in the Territories. In so doing, Arafat and the PLO wanted to strengthen the Arab and Palestinian negotiating position in their dealings with the Israelis.

Nazarbayev, from his initial presidential interaction with Arafat, took a very cautious approach to dealing with the potentially messy Israeli-Palestinian issue. Now it is apparent that from the very beginning of the relationship Nazarbayev worked with both the Israelis and the Palestinians in an evenhanded and fair manner. Jacob Abadi's assessment was accurate when he argued that "President Nursultan Nazarbayev opened his country's doors to Israel but at the same time he thought it prudent to meet with Arafat."⁴⁹⁹ Nazarbayev's balanced approach in interacting with protagonists from both sides allowed Kazakhstan to remain removed from the conflict and in fact facilitated Kazakhstan's role as an international mediator. In this sense, Nazarbayev shrewdly placed the national interests of Kazakhstan ahead of the parochial benefit of either the Palestinians or the Israelis.

Israel Responds

Following the diplomatic maneuvering of Arafat and the PLO, Israel took steps to address the unfolding situation in Kazakhstan. Palestinian attempts to garner Kazakh support at the expense of Israeli influence in the region exacerbated Israel's fears. Nazarbayev's 23 December 1991 recognition of the State of Palestine and agreement to exchange ambassadors reinforced the Israeli government's perception

⁴⁹⁹ Jacob Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in Asia: Garrison State Diplomacy* (London, 2004), p. 437.

that Central Asia must be engaged to ensure Israel's national security. A failure to do so would weaken Israel's international standing and compromise its position with the Palestinians and its Arab neighbors.

Shortly after Nazarbayev's meeting with Arafat, Israel engaged in a dramatic diplomatic course of action. Israel began an intensive effort to use its influence with the American government to have Washington impress upon Nazarbayev and his government that relations with the PLO were not in Almaty's interest. Among the tactics employed by the Israelis, "the Shamir government asked twenty-three Members of Congress to send in February [1992] a letter to Nursultan Nazarbayev... to demand he end his support for 'these terrorists'."⁵⁰⁰ The Shamir government's decision to invoke its American lobby and utilize the leverage and weight of Congress to attempt to influence Kazakh foreign policy serves as an indicator of the seriousness with which the course of Israeli-Kazakh relations were perceived by policy makers in Israel.

Despite the strained relationship Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir had with the US government while he was in office (1986–1992),⁵⁰¹ this was no ordinary letter writing campaign. Members of Congress have historically taken a great interest in issues related to Israeli security, and there was no reason to think otherwise in this case. Within Congress, an individual representative or senator's position on Israel is taken *extremely* seriously, and a candidate's record on issues relating to Israel's security and the US-Israel relationship can figure prominently.

Israel's urgent actions to bring Washington's clout to bear on this issue did not rest with the Shamir mailings. Secretary of State James Baker was also asked by

⁵⁰⁰ Leon T. Hadar, "The Last Days of Likud: The American-Israeli Big Chill," *The Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 4 (Summer 1992): pp. 87-88.

⁵⁰¹ This was primarily the \$10 billion loan guarantee fiasco for housing for newly arrived Soviet Jews.

Israel to urge Kazakhstan to step back from its relations with the Palestinians.⁵⁰² Israel routinely lobbies the American government to endorse its policies, but it bears keeping in mind that Secretary Baker was not only one of the closest advisors to then-US President George H. W. Bush, but he was also the prime architect of the Madrid Peace Process. Furthermore, Baker was personally engaged in US diplomatic efforts in Kazakhstan, focusing his efforts on his repeated attempts to persuade the country to give up its Soviet-era nuclear arms and become a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).⁵⁰³

In the end, the joint Israeli-American pressure on Kazakhstan to distance itself from Arafat and the PLO did not have its desired effect. Kazakhstan did not break off ties with the Palestinians. I would argue that the intense Israeli reaction generated by Nazarbayev's meeting with Arafat was symptomatic of Israel's deeply held concerns over the fate of Kazakhstan. Moreover it is likely that this episode in part contributed to Nazarbayev's efforts to remain firmly neutral in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel had the potential to offer many things to Kazakhstan, especially investment and access to Washington, two benefits of relations with Israel that Foreign Minister Shimon Peres would later comment upon in Almaty. Nazarbayev proceeded to lead Kazakh foreign policy down the middle road, equally engaging Israel and the Palestinians while calling for a measured and balanced settlement in the Middle East. Israeli-American pressure may very well have also influenced Nazarbayev to launch and fund the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), an international group designed to combat regional conflict and promote peace and security throughout Asia (to be discussed later in this chapter).

⁵⁰² Hadar, "Last Days of Likud," pp. 87-88.

⁵⁰³ These issues and timing are discussed by Saivetz, "Central Asia: Emerging Relations," p. 313.

Laying the Groundwork for Diplomatic Relations

Following Foreign Minister David Levy's recognition of Kazakhstan on 25 December 1991, Israel moved quickly to establish its presence in the country. Among the first orders of business for Israel was the creation of an infrastructure to support its new relationship with Kazakhstan. This involved the creation of an embassy, preparations for establishing air connections, and the establishment of a communications channel. From the outset, Israel sought to create a long-term relationship with Kazakhstan, and this is evidenced by the steps taken early in the first phase of the relationship.

Among the first steps taken by Israel was to conclude an agreement with Kazakhstan to create a direct satellite telephone connection. This was essential for the operation of the embassy; however, it also established a foothold in Kazakhstan for Israeli telecom firms to update the dire state of the republic's infrastructure. On 21 January 1992, Israeli Communication Minister Rafa'el Pinhasi met in Almaty with Kazakh Prime Minister Sergey Tereshchenko in the first intergovernmental meeting and they agreed to establish a direct satellite telephone channel linking Israel and Kazakhstan.⁵⁰⁴ Telephone calls had previously been routed through Moscow and Israel beat out many other international competitors to build the first satellite link. By February 1992 that had changed. This episode is discussed in more depth in the section on commercial relations, below.

For the first two years, the Israeli embassy in Almaty was located within the Hotel Kazakhstan. In 1994 the embassy relocated to its permanent building on Zheltoksan Street.⁵⁰⁵ Having the embassy housed initially for two years in a hotel further underscored the need for direct communications with Israel, rather than

⁵⁰⁴ "Israel and Kazakhstan to set up direct satellite telephone link," *Itar-TASS World Service*, in English, 1945GMT 21 January 1992, in *BBC SWB*, SU/1285 A4/2[4] (23 January 1992).

⁵⁰⁵ See *Israel Yearbook & Almanac*, volumes 47, 48, and 49.

routing calls and cables through Moscow on non-secure Soviet-era hubs. It is neither unusual nor uncommon to take time in acquiring a suitable building to house an embassy, and it indicates that the Israelis were seeking a long-term relationship. That the Israelis were not allocated a building outright reflects Kazakhstan's initial perception that relations with Israel did not require special consideration.

The last component in this initial set-up of was to make provisions for direct flights between Tel Aviv and Almaty. During 1991 to 1995, there were no regular, direct flights despite the existence of an aviation agreement between the two countries made in September 1992. Charter flights, however, did and continue to connect Israel and Kazakhstan.⁵⁰⁶ The lack of such regular, direct flights is not surprising, especially given the weekly flights on the Tel Aviv-Tashkent route which was discussed in the preceding chapter. However, as Kazakhstan boasts the largest economy in the region, as well as a Jewish community of between 7,000 to 12,000 people (some estimate the Jewish population as high as 20,000; approximately 7,570 Kazakh Jews have made Aliyah to Israel since 1989⁵⁰⁷), the establishment of such flights in the future remains a possibility.⁵⁰⁸

An important interest for Israel was the Jewish community in Kazakhstan. The Kazakh Jewish community is well organized and Israeli assistance programs have worked to build schools and a social welfare system for those Kazakh Jews that did not make Aliyah to Israel. However, in the case of Kazakhstan, it is important not to overstate the importance that this connection played past the initial period in Israeli-

⁵⁰⁶ Observations made by the author during field research in Israel (1999 and 2006) and in Kazakhstan (2005).

⁵⁰⁷ Chris Bird, "Synagogue won't stop Jews leaving Central Asia," *Reuters*, 26 August 1996, and Lev Krichevsky, "In Kazakhstan, Jewish families carry on a tradition born in Persia," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 3 November 2002.

⁵⁰⁸ Israel recently stated that it intends to establish regular flights to Kazakhstan in the future. See "Kazakh Foreign Minister meets Israeli Ambassador," *KAZAKHSTAN: Week by Week* (News Bulletin Released by the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the State of Israel), 16 August 2004, <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il> (accessed 29 April 2006).

Kazakh relations.⁵⁰⁹ The Jewish community in Kazakhstan contributed to Israel's interest,⁵¹⁰ and the fact that there is no history of anti-Semitism in Kazakhstan facilitated the rapid advancements in the bilateral relationship seen in the first decade of Kazakh independence.⁵¹¹ Kazakh-Jewish ties date back to the Second World War when Jewish evacuees were welcomed in by their new Kazakh neighbors. Commenting on the close Israeli-Kazakh ties that emerged in the 1990s, Israeli Ambassador Israel Mey-Ami asserted that "the Jewish people and the people of Israel remember the hospitality extended by the Kazakh and Kyrgyz people to the Jewish refugees during World War II and we are grateful for that."⁵¹² Because Israel's relationship with the Kazakh Jewish community is much beyond the scope of this study, it will be mentioned only as warranted.

The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations

It was not until 11 February 1992 that the Israelis began overt diplomatic advances to Kazakhstan, when Aryeh Levin, Israel's Ambassador to Moscow, toured the region in preparation for the "establishment of full diplomatic relations."⁵¹³ During his visit Levin discussed the desire of his government to enhance commercial relations and technical cooperation.⁵¹⁴ Israel was preparing to offer Kazakhstan and the other republics what they wanted and needed most, and what the Palestinians could not offer: economic assistance. The Palestinians attempted to compete for a

⁵⁰⁹ Nikolay Kuzmin, PhD (Kazakh political analyst), interview with the author, 24 January 2005, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

⁵¹⁰ "Motives of bilateral relations between Israeli and Kazakhstan," [in Arabic] *Qods News Agency* (Palestine), 23 January 2006, <http://www.qodsna.com> (accessed 30 April 2006).

⁵¹¹ Yerkin Tukumov (Deputy Director, Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies), interview with the author, 26 January 2005, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

⁵¹² Israel Mey-Ami, "Israel in Relation with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 30 December 1999.

⁵¹³ "Israel set to establish diplomatic relations with Central Asian republics," *Israel Broadcasting Authority TV* (Jerusalem), in Hebrew, 1730 GMT 11 February 1992, in *BBC SWB*, SU/1303 A4/1[3] (13 February 1992).

⁵¹⁴ "Israel set to establish," in *BBC SWB*, SU/1303 A4/1[3].

short time by offering to subsidize a hospital to treat victims of radiation sickness at Semipalatinsk, but the PLO—itself a major recipient of economic assistance—was in no position to offer a sustained program to Almaty. This was known by all parties, and was a likely motivator for US-Israeli joint programs in the region: to demonstrate to Kazakhstan the benefits of cooperation and collaboration.

On 9 April 1992, Nazarbayev again received Levin and they signed the official documents establishing diplomatic relations between Kazakhstan and Israel. Nazarbayev remarked at the time that his country was interested in obtaining loans and agricultural assistance from Israel. Levin stated that Israel was interested in working together in several areas including cotton production, telecommunications, and the pharmaceutical industry. The Israeli ambassador also suggested that Kazakhstan could benefit from applying Israeli desert agricultural techniques. The Arab-Israeli conflict was also discussed, and Nazarbayev told Levin that Kazakhstan favored a peaceful solution.⁵¹⁵

Following the establishment of diplomatic relations, a number of diplomatic visits ensued in order to consolidate the emerging relationship, as enumerated in table 5.1 below. Table 5.2 details the agreements reached between the two states during this period. Discussions of the most significant visits and diplomatic agreements which took place during follow in the subsections below. As table 5.2 demonstrates, the majority of the accords secured during this phase of the relationship concerned economic relations; these will be examined in the next section of this chapter, which focuses on commercial relations for 1991–1995.

⁵¹⁵ "President Nazarbayev Meets Visiting Israelis, Discusses Economy with Ambassador," Moscow *Interfax* (Moscow), in English (text from *Presidential Bulletin*), 1615 GMT 10 April 1992, in FBIS-CE-92 (14 April 1992), p. 56.

Table 5.1 Major Visits, 1991–1995

Date	Visitor	Purpose	Location
Dec '91	<i>PLO Chairman Arafat</i>	<i>Discuss recognition & exchange of ambassadors</i>	<i>Kazakhstan</i>
Jan '92	Minister of Communications Rafa'el Pinhasi	Establish satellite link	Kazakhstan
Feb '92	Ambassador Aryeh Levin	Preparation of diplomatic relations	Kazakhstan
Apr '92	Kazakh Trade Minister Zheltikov	Discussion of increased relations	Israel
Apr '92	Kazakh Agriculture Minister	Discussion of increased relations	Israel
Apr '92	JAFI head Simcha Dinitz, Ambassador Levin	Ceremony to mark relations	Kazakhstan
Sep '92	Kazakh PM Sergey Tereshchenko	Discussion of increased relations	Israel
Dec '92	President Chaim Herzog	Working visit	Kazakhstan
Mar/Apr '93	Economic Minister Shimon Shitrit, Energy Minister Amnon Rubenstein, and Dep Knesset Chairman Ovadia Eli	Discussion of Israeli investment; led trade group	Kazakhstan
Mar/Apr '93	First meeting of Israeli-Kazakh Joint Trade Commission	Trade meeting	Kazakhstan
Nov '94	Second meeting of Israeli-Kazakh Joint Trade Commission	Trade meeting	Israel
Jan '95	Speaker of Kazakh Parliament Abish Kekilbayevich	Working visit	Israel
Aug '95	FM Shimon Peres	Official state visit	Kazakhstan
Dec '95	President Nazarbayev	First official state visit	Israel

Source: FBIS; BBC SWB; Abadi (2006); Aras (2002); Freedman (1993); author's research.

Table 5.2 Major Agreements, 1991–1995

Date	Agreement	Focus	Where Signed
25 Dec '91	Israeli recognition of Kazakhstan	Political	Israel
21 Jan '92	Agreement to set up satellite communications link	Political/Economic	Kazakhstan
2 Apr '92	Agreement on Israeli participation in agricultural development	Economic	Kazakhstan
2 Apr '92	Agreement on cooperation in industrial technologies	Economic	Israel
9 Apr '92	Establishment of diplomatic relations	Political	Kazakhstan
Sep '92	Aviation agreement	Economic	Israel
Sep '92	Protocol to establish Joint Economic Commission	Economic	Israel
3 Feb '93	Knesset Finance Committee approves foreign trade insurance	Economic	Israel
30 Mar '93	Cooperation agreement with the Israel Institute for International Trade	Economic	Kazakhstan
30 Mar '93	Agreement on charter flights	Economic	Kazakhstan
30-31 Aug '95	Air service agreement	Economic	Kazakhstan
30-31 Aug '95	Scientific agreement	Academic	Kazakhstan
30-31 Aug '95	Agreement on economic cooperation	Economic	Kazakhstan
30-31 Aug '95	Agreement on cultural cooperation	Academic	Kazakhstan
30-31 Aug '95	Agreement on tourism cooperation	Economic	Kazakhstan
30-31 Aug '95	Protocol on consultation between the Foreign Ministries of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the State of Israel	Political	Kazakhstan
Dec '95	Proclamation of mutual friendship	Political	Israel
Dec '95	Declaration on Basic Principles of Relations	Political	Israel
Dec '95	Cooperation agreement on protection of investments	Economic	Israel
Dec '95	Protocol on agricultural cooperation	Economic	Israel
Dec '95	Protocol on medical cooperation	Economic	Israel
Dec '95	Protocol on ecological cooperation	Economic	Israel
27 Dec '95	Bilateral Treaty for the Reciprocal Promotion & Protection of Foreign Investments (came into force 19 Feb '97)	Economic	Israel

Sources: Freedman (1993); FBIS; author's research.

Prime Minister Tereshchenko Visits Israel

The Levin meeting was followed by Prime Minister Sergey Tereshchenko's September 1992 official visit to Jerusalem, and in later months there were meetings with President Chaim Herzog, Foreign Minister Peres, and Knesset Speaker Shevach Weiss, and discussions focused on further cooperation.⁵¹⁶ The participation of Israeli firms in the Kazakh agrarian sector and the export of Israeli advanced technologies for the cotton sector were two of the issues of Tereshchenko's meetings. Tereshchenko also signed an aviation agreement,⁵¹⁷ negotiated for Israeli assistance in promoting Kazakh exports on the international market, and discussed greater Israeli investment in modernizing Kazakhstan's aging industrial infrastructure.⁵¹⁸ Tereshchenko and Peres spoke about expanding bilateral trade, Israeli economic and technical assistance, and the good results that Israeli firms had thus far achieved in the telecom and agricultural sectors.⁵¹⁹ Israeli and Kazakh officials noted there was much potential in the warming Israeli-Kazakh for the development of a mutually beneficial relationship.

Israeli-Kazakh relations were "very friendly"⁵²⁰ and from a Kazakh perspective, very useful. The maintenance of good relations with Israel translated into cooperation with the West, especially through the Diaspora and the American Jewish community. While Israel's ability to effect change and achieve its goals has been overstated in most cases, its ability to influence American policy is significant and

⁵¹⁶ "Tereshchenko Arrives in Israel for Talks," *Kazakh Radio* (Alma-Ata), in Russian, 0800 GMT 8 September 1992, in FBIS-CE-92 (9 September 1992), p. 42.

⁵¹⁷ Freedman, "Israel and Central Asia," p. 18.

⁵¹⁸ Fedorchenko, "Kazakhstan-Israel," <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001, site discontinued).

⁵¹⁹ Aleksandr Zhudro, "Working meeting held," *Itar-TASS World Service*, in Russian (text of report from Tel Aviv), 0835 GMT 7 September 1992, in FBIS-CE-92 (9 September 1992), p. 42.

⁵²⁰ Interview with Kazakh Foreign Ministry official, January 2005, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

should not be overlooked.⁵²¹ Kazakh and Israeli leaders both knew this fact, and it was skillfully used by leaders in Israel to advance Israeli policy concerns. Israel's ability to influence policy in Washington was viewed as a "major incentive"⁵²² behind Kazakhstan's friendship with Israel and the Diaspora.

Visit of President Herzog

In October 1992, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin approved the unique arrangement in which the travel of Israel's president was facilitated by an Israeli industrialist with business interests in both China and Kazakhstan. Saul Eisenberg was one of the very first Israelis to do business in Kazakhstan (even pre-independence Kazakhstan). Rabin's official approval thereby facilitated the blurring of state diplomacy and ostensibly private sector commercial activity, and thus gave the government's endorsement to this venture. A few months later, in December 1992, Israeli President Chaim Herzog stopped in Almaty on his way back to Israel from an official visit to China and met with President Nazarbayev. The People's Republic of China had only recently established full diplomatic relations with Israel, and Herzog was at that point the highest ranking Israeli official to travel to China. Herzog was flying aboard the private aircraft of Israeli industrialist Saul Eisenberg because El Al did not have a Tel Aviv-Beijing flight scheduled on the day Herzog wished to travel. While Eisenberg is thought to have accompanied Herzog on the trip to China, it was noted by one of Herzog's spokespeople that the businessman did not accompany the Israeli president during any of his official state meetings.⁵²³ The significance of the role Eisenberg played in facilitating President Herzog's visit to Kazakhstan is

⁵²¹ Brenda Shaffer, PhD (University of Haifa), conversation with the author, 4 November 2005, Jerusalem.

⁵²² Kazakh Foreign Ministry official, interview.

⁵²³ "Eisenberg flies president to China," *Israeli foreign affairs* IX, no. 2 (26 February 1993), p. 6.

reaffirmed by the fact that Eisenberg and his close business associate David Kimche—former Mossad deputy director—were very active in Kazakhstan. This fact has reinforced speculation that Eisenberg was acting, in part, at the behest of the Israeli government.⁵²⁴

The two presidents agreed during their meeting to further develop commercial, economic, scientific, and technical cooperation, and Nazarbayev stated that Kazakhstan was in favor of balanced relations with both the Israelis and the Palestinians.⁵²⁵ While in Almaty, Herzog invited Nazarbayev to visit Israel. Although this visit was originally scheduled for February 1994,⁵²⁶ Nazarbayev did not make his first trip to Israel until December 1995.

Visit of Foreign Minister Peres

Israel continued its diplomatic overtures and at the end of August 1995, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres paid an official visit to Kazakhstan. Peres' goal was to confirm Almaty's commitment to a strong partnership with Israel, to which Nazarbayev responded by stressing that Israeli-Kazakh relations were bound to grow closer still.⁵²⁷ A number of agreements were signed during meetings with Nazarbayev, Prime Minister Akezhan Qazhygeldin, and Foreign Minister Kasymzhomart Tokayev on issues such as economic and diplomatic cooperation; they also agreed on a protocol on consultation between the two nations' foreign

⁵²⁴ Fedorchenko, "Kazakhstan-Israel," <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001, site discontinued).

⁵²⁵ "Israeli President Holds Talks with Nazarbayev," *Itar-TASS World Service*, in Russian, 0829 GMT 31 December 1992, in FBIS-CE-92 (31 December 1992), p. 59.

⁵²⁶ Untitled brief, *Israeli foreign affairs* IX, no. 2 (26 February 1993), p. 5.

⁵²⁷ Ivan Zakharchenko, "Israeli Foreign Minister Peres Pays Official Visit, Holds Talks with Nazarbayev," *Itar-TASS*, in English, 1909 GMT 30 August 1995, in FBIS-CE-95 (31 August 1995), p. 67.

ministries.⁵²⁸ Peres also discussed issues of regional security and stability, and Nazarbayev invited Israeli firms to participate in the Kazakh hydrocarbon sector.⁵²⁹

It was reported that Peres specifically discussed "the two countries' attitudes towards nuclear weapons."⁵³⁰ At the time of their meeting with Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan was already committed to nuclear disarmament and had signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty eighteen months earlier, in February 1994.⁵³¹ Peres praised the Kazakh decision to remove nuclear weapons from its territory despite pressure from Muslim nations to retain them.⁵³² It is reasonable to conclude that the discussions focused on the ultimate disposal of the Soviet-era nuclear arms and technologies. It is also very likely that Peres discussed Israeli fears and concerns regarding Iranian attempts to acquire Kazakh WMD technology. The regional policy of Kazakhstan was also discussed, again hinting at the Israeli perception of a so-called Kazakh 'special responsibility' in Central Asia, and it was agreed that Nazarbayev would visit Israel at the end of 1995.⁵³³

Before leaving Almaty, Peres was asked to comment on the increasing cooperation between the two states. An Israeli reporter accompanying the foreign minister asked Peres for his impressions as to why Israel had been able to secure such close ties with Kazakhstan. Peres answered:

There is a strong Muslim element, but there is a strong separation between state and religion. There is much admiration for Israel. They look up to us as a pocket superpower that has achieved its strength and hope and influence by relying basically on the human element,

⁵²⁸ Zakharchenko, "Israeli Foreign Minister Peres," in FBIS-CE-95, p. 67.

⁵²⁹ "Nazarbayev to Visit Israel," *Qol Yisra'el* (Jerusalem), in Hebrew, 1600 GMT 30 August 1995, in FBIS-CE-95 (31 August 1995), p. 67.

⁵³⁰ "Peres in Almaty," *labyrinth: Central Asia Quarterly*, autumn 1995: p. 10.

⁵³¹ Shirin Akiner, "Soviet Military Legacy in Kazakhstan," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 6, issue 12, December 1994, <http://www.janes.com>.

⁵³² "Nazarbayev to Visit Israel," in FBIS-CE-95, p. 67.

⁵³³ "Peres in Almaty," p. 10.

and they look upon Israel also as an entry into the next century and to the Western world.⁵³⁴

In this brief statement Peres acknowledged an essential Kazakh benefit of positive interaction with Israel: assistance in modernization and development. As this chapter demonstrates, through constructive engagement Israel was able not only able to satisfy its own national security concerns, but also provide Kazakhstan with much needed investment, trade, and access to the West, thus ensuring that Almaty would not align against Israeli interests.

Nazarbayev's First Official Visit to Israel

In December 1995 Nazarbayev traveled to both Israel and Gaza, accompanied by over 100 Kazakh businessmen.⁵³⁵ During this visit the two nations signed a proclamation of mutual friendship⁵³⁶ and reached an agreement to work closely on investment, medical, and ecological issues.⁵³⁷ In a sign of expanding ties, Peres observed that the Israeli-Kazakh relationship was “a marriage of geography [theirs] and history [ours].”⁵³⁸ In recognition of ever improving relations, on the eve of his departure Nazarbayev signed a decree to upgrade Kazakhstan’s representation in Israel and officially establish a Kazakh embassy in Tel Aviv.⁵³⁹

Peres and Nazarbayev discussed several issues of Israel-Kazakh defense cooperation such as the modernization of Kazakh aeronautical equipment, conversion of defense industries, and coordination in fighting terrorism, as did defense ministers

⁵³⁴ “Israel’s Peres Signs Four Agreements,” *Qol Yisra’el* (Jerusalem), in Hebrew, 1500 GMT 31 August 1995, in FBIS-CE-95 (1 September 1995), p. 53.

⁵³⁵ “Nazarbayev to Israel and Gaza,” *labyrinth: Central Asia Quarterly* 3, no. 1, 1996: p. 10.

⁵³⁶ *Israel Yearbook & Almanac 1996: Events of 1995*, Volume 50 (Jerusalem, 1996), p. 112.

⁵³⁷ “Motives of bilateral relations,” <http://www.qodsna.com> (accessed 30 April 2006).

⁵³⁸ *Israel Yearbook & Almanac 1996*, p. 112.

⁵³⁹ “President Authorizes Embassy Opening In Israel,” *Itar-TASS*, in English, 0949 GMT 21 December 1995, in FBIS-CE-92 (21 December 1995), p. 51.

Uri Or and Sagadat Nurmagambetov.⁵⁴⁰ Nazarbayev's discussion with then-Foreign Minister Ehud Barak addressed their mutual concerns over Iranian influence; the meeting was significant because Barak "expressed concern that Iran might look to Kazakhstan for expertise in helping it to develop a nuclear weapon capability."⁵⁴¹ Nazarbayev responded by noting that he was working to counter Iranian influence in Kazakhstan.⁵⁴² This early interaction foreshadows the role Nazarbayev played four years later when he acted to broker meetings between the Israeli and Iranian governments.

Before returning to Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev signed several agreements in Gaza with Arafat on economic, industrial, and cultural cooperation.⁵⁴³

ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

One of the principle drivers of Israel's policy toward Kazakhstan was the desire to secure a firm foothold in Central Asia's most dynamic economy. In order to facilitate trade between Israel and Kazakhstan, the Israeli government became an active promoter of Israeli business interests. With each state visit, Israeli leaders discussed the promotion of Israeli commercial interests in Kazakhstan. While this was undeniably borne out of a desire to maximize Israeli penetration of the region's most promising economy, it was also a means with which to draw Israel and Kazakhstan closer together politically.

⁵⁴⁰ "President Nazarbayev In Israel," *Itar-TASS*, in English, 1103 GMT 26 December 1995, in FBIS-CE-92 (27 December 1995), p. 30.

⁵⁴¹ "Nazarbayev to Israel," p. 10.

⁵⁴² "Nazarbayev to Israel," p. 10.

⁵⁴³ "Nazarbayev, Arafat sign cooperation agreements," *Kazakh Radio* (Almaty), in Russian, 0400 GMT 29 December 1995, in FBIS-CE-95 (29 December 1995), pp. 41-42.

Structure of Economic Relations

One example of how the state became involved in actively encouraging and supporting these commercial efforts in Kazakhstan and Central Asia was the Israel Foreign Trade Risk Insurance Corporation's expansion of coverage for Israeli ventures in the region. In an unprecedented move, on 3 February 1993 the Knesset Finance Committee approved over \$220 million in trade insurance for projects in Kazakhstan.⁵⁴⁴ The IFTRIC's expanded coverage affected Israeli investments in Kazakhstan and throughout the republics, most of all in Kazakhstan, which at the time was Israel's largest market in the region. Underscoring the links between political developments and economic investment, the increase in insurance coverage occurred after Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev paid an official visit to Israel and proclaimed that Kyrgyzstan would be the first Muslim nation—and only the third country after Costa Rica and El Salvador, both of whose embassies are subsidized by the Israeli government—to open an embassy in Jerusalem.⁵⁴⁵

Creating strong commercial links between Israel and Kazakhstan would ensure that Israel and Almaty grew closer. Moreover, increased economic relations would create greater opportunities for Israeli and Kazakh leaders to meet; such meetings provided further openings for the leadership of both nations to share their mutual concerns.

For Kazakhstan, a major factor in doing business with Israel was that Israel possessed free trade agreements with a number of nations. The lure of reaching potential consumers in North America, the EU, Central Europe, Jordan, and Turkey

⁵⁴⁴ "Shaul Eisenberg emerges from the shadows," *Israeli foreign affairs* IX, no. 2 (26 February 1993), p. 4.

⁵⁴⁵ "Kyrgyzstan's embassy in Jerusalem tops Ukraine's," *Israeli foreign affairs* IX, no. 2 (26 February 1993), p. 4. Amid much confusion, Kyrgyzstan quickly backed away from this remark.

was significant.⁵⁴⁶ This aspect of Israel-Kazakh trade, however, is not reflected in the trade figures presented in this study. This is because Israel's Central Bureau for Statistics notes only those transactions destined for the domestic Israeli market.

When examining the official start of commercial relations between Israel and Kazakhstan, two facts stand out: first, economic ties developed before the diplomatic relationship did. The initial deal to upgrade the Kazakh telecom sector and accords signed by Kazakh Trade Minister Zheltikov took place before Levin had secured full diplomatic relations. This indicates that from the outset, the Israeli government sought to create a lasting, multidimensional relationship with Kazakhstan. The second notable fact concerns who led Israel's official trade discussions. At the senior level, these efforts were led by David Kimche, former director-general of the Foreign Ministry and deputy director of the Mossad. Kimche, who had previously been responsible for nurturing subtle relationships for Israel, began working on building economic bridges in Central Asia shortly after the region became independent and put out feelers as mentioned previously, was reported to have worked closely with Saul Eisenberg. Kimche's involvement demonstrated the Israeli government's strategic desire to create strong links with Kazakhstan.

Operationally, it was not Minister of Economics and Planning David Magen, Minister of Industry and Trade Moshe Nissim, or Minister of Finance Yitzhak Modai who led official trade talks with Kazakhstan; rather it was Simcha Dinitz, head of the Jewish Agency for Israel, president of the World Jewish Congress, and chairman of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization who spoke on behalf of the Israeli government.⁵⁴⁷ Dinitz accompanied Ambassador Levin to Kazakhstan in early April 1992 for the ceremony marking the opening of diplomatic relations, but Levin did not

⁵⁴⁶ Fedorchenko, "Kazakhstan-Israel," <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001, site discontinued).

⁵⁴⁷ *Central Asia Monitor*, no. 2, 1992: p. 7.

remain in Almaty while Dinitz held discussions regarding the economic relationship. Because he was a former ambassador to the United States (1973–1978), Dinitz was intimately involved in issues affecting Israeli national security and had been a delegate to the Camp David peace talks. During the 1973 War, Dinitz had played a major role in obtaining essential American arms-lifts that played a key role in the defense of the Jewish state. While head of the Jewish Agency, Dinitz coordinated the immigration of over one million Jews to Israel. He also became well known as one of the main architects of Israel's strong relationship with the Jewish Diaspora, itself one of Israel's key security policies as discussed in chapter two.⁵⁴⁸

The fact that Dinitz led the first official economic discussions with the Kazakhs after the opening of official diplomatic relations is noteworthy because it signifies the primacy of security, rather than trade, in Israel's relationship with Kazakhstan. Dinitz's official capacity was to facilitate continued Jewish immigration, itself essential because it contributes to the future security of the state. The emigration of former Soviet Jews was a very important issue in Israel at the time, and the fact that Dinitz worked on trade discussions with the Kazakhs suggests that the issues of security and trade were connected. Otherwise, it would have been expected that another representative of the Israeli government such as Economic Minister Magen, Trade Minister Nissim, or Finance Minister Modai would have traveled to Kazakhstan with Dinitz and Levin for official talks.

Framework of Economic Relations

Israeli-Kazakh trade relations developed out of a strong framework created during the first period of their relationship. Within the first four years numerous

⁵⁴⁸ Biographical data on Dinitz drawn from <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Dinitz.html> (accessed 18 June 2006).

economic and commercial accords were signed. Communications Minister Pinhasi's agreement to establish a satellite telephone link in January 1992 marked the beginning of a long-term economic and political commitment to Kazakhstan. This was bolstered by two agreements signed in Israel by visiting Kazakh Trade Minister Zheltikov in April 1992 prior to the opening of official diplomatic relations. The first was an agreement on Israeli participation in agricultural development, and the second was an agreement to cooperate in industrial technologies.⁵⁴⁹ This was followed in February 1993 by the Knesset's expansion of foreign trade insurance.

During Prime Minister Tereshchenko's visit to Israel in September 1992, the two nations signed an aviation accord and he and Prime Minister Rabin signed a protocol to create the Kazakh-Israeli Joint Governmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation.⁵⁵⁰ While with Rabin, Tereshchenko delivered a dossier containing details on 120 projects in which the Kazakhs were inviting the Israelis to participate; these projects were in areas such as agricultural technology, irrigation, soil improvement, storage of agricultural products, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, and space research.⁵⁵¹ Israel was also reported to have expressed an interest in Kazakh water desalinization.⁵⁵²

This visit was then followed by a trade delegation and the inaugural meeting of the Joint Governmental Commission in March–April 1993. Additional agreements were reached in August 1995 when President Nazarbayev and Foreign Minister Peres signed accords in Almaty on economic and tourism cooperation and signed a further aviation agreement. While in Israel in December 1995 for his visit state visit,

⁵⁴⁹ "Republic, Israel Expand Trade, Cooperation," *Kazakh Radio* (Alma-Ata), in Kazakh, 1400 GMT 2 April 1992, in FBIS-CE-92 (9 April 1992), p. 59.

⁵⁵⁰ Aleksandr Zhudro, "Economic Protocol Signed," *Itar-TASS*, in English (text of report from Tel Aviv), 0800 GMT 8 September 1992, in FBIS-CE-92 (9 September 1992), p. 42.

⁵⁵¹ "Prime Minister, Israel's Rabin Sign Protocol," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (Moscow), in Russian, first edition, p. 7, in FBIS-CE-92 (15 September 1992), p. 35.

⁵⁵² Zhudro, "Economic Protocol Signed," in FBIS-CE-92, p. 42.

Nazarbayev signed an investment cooperation agreement to protect Israeli investment in Kazakhstan and yet another agricultural accord.

These agreements created a firm foundation on which investment and commercial relations were built. The institutionalization of the economic relationship allowed Israel to invest significantly over a short period of time in a developing economy. The joint nature of these accords demonstrates that this relationship was being advanced from both sides. The Israelis were eager to generate profits while creating a strong friendship, whereas the Kazakhs sought to improve their economy and benefit from Israel's advanced technologies and access to other markets. Several of these agreements are detailed in the following subsection.

In a significant vote of confidence in the Kazakh economy, "the Israeli parliament... approved a huge specific-purpose credit for Kazakhstan, the first time the Israeli government has taken such a step for another country."⁵⁵³ The Knesset would not have taken this rare action had it harbored reservations regarding the financial viability of Israeli firms in the Kazakh market. Furthermore, in mid-May 1993, Bank Hapoalim granted a Kazakh bank an \$80 million line of credit in order to facilitate the Kazakh import of Israeli agricultural equipment and training services.⁵⁵⁴ Andrey Fedorchenko, director of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, noted that as of June 1993, the Knesset and Israeli government guaranteed "65 per cent of the value of private credits advanced by national companies for economic projects in Kazakhstan."⁵⁵⁵ These actions again underscore Israeli confidence in the Kazakh market and the competence of Israeli

⁵⁵³ Shafiqul Islam, "Capitalism in the Silk Route?" in *Central Asian and the World: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan*, ed. Michael Mandelbaum (New York, 1994), p. 174.

⁵⁵⁴ *Israel Yearbook & Almanac 1994: Events of 1993*, Volume 48, (Jerusalem, 1994), p. 141.

⁵⁵⁵ Fedorchenko, "Kazakhstan-Israel," <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001, site discontinued).

firms. Such loans and government guarantees are examples of the fluidity between diplomacy and business in strategic Kazakhstan.

The economic relationship continued to develop quickly, and in late March–early April 1993 Minister of Economics and Planning Shimon Shitrit, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure Amnon Rubenstein, and Knesset Deputy Chairman Ovadia Eli⁵⁵⁶ led a delegation of 80 businessmen to Almaty.⁵⁵⁷ The delegation brought with them the confirmation that Kazakhstan would be granted Israel's first ever special purpose credit.⁵⁵⁸ In a series of meetings with Nazarbayev, Tereshchenko, Deputy Prime Minister Galym Abuseitov, and Foreign Economic Relations Minister Syzdyk Abishev, the delegation discussed economic cooperation and specific opportunities for Israeli interests in construction and reconstruction programs, and they reached a number of preliminary accords.⁵⁵⁹ At the time it was noted that Israeli-Kazakh business meetings were becoming regular as a result of Kazakh investment policies, an attractive tax regime, and the successes of Israeli firms in the agricultural and telecom sectors.⁵⁶⁰ Their discussions focused on large scale, long-term opportunities for Israeli businesses in a variety of sectors including agriculture, food processing, pharmaceuticals, heavy and light industries, transport, construction, banking, and finance.⁵⁶¹ Israeli irrigation, telecom, energy, and mining businesses also continued to do well in Kazakhstan, as reflected in the substantial trade figures.

⁵⁵⁶ Eli was also Deputy Minister of Defense and a board member of the Jewish Agency.

⁵⁵⁷ Boris Maynayevev, "Israeli Delegation on Familiarization Visit," *Itar-TASS*, in English, 0912 GMT 29 March 1993, in FBIS-CE-93 (30 March 1993), p. 72.

⁵⁵⁸ Gennadiy Kulagin, "Nazarbayev Meets Israeli Business Delegation," *Itar-TASS*, in English, 1501 GMT 31 March 1993, in FBIS-CE-93 (1 April 1993), p. 66.

⁵⁵⁹ "Further On Official Visit By Israeli Ministers," *Kazakh Radio Network* (Alma-Ata), in Kazakh, 2300 GMT 31 March 1993, in FBIS-CE-93 (2 April 1993), p. 60.

⁵⁶⁰ "Israeli Delegation Pays Visit, Discusses Cooperation," *Ostankino Television First Channel* (Moscow), in Russian, 1400 GMT 2 April 1993, in FBIS-CE-93, pp. 69-70.

⁵⁶¹ Islam, "Capitalism in the Silk Route?" p. 174, and "Israeli Delegation Pays Visit," in FBIS-CE-93, pp. 69-70.

In order to continue the pace of economic relations and facilitate greater trade, the Kazakh-Israeli Joint Governmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation was created in September 1992. This organization was "one of the most important achievements of the two sides in the economic sphere."⁵⁶² According to the Kazakh government, the Joint Commission met three times during the first decade of Kazakh independence: first March–April 1993 in Almaty, in November 1994 in Jerusalem, and finally in June 1998 in Almaty.⁵⁶³ The Joint Commission worked to ease trade restrictions between the two states and served as a regular forum for representatives from both nations to discuss the bilateral relationship. At the close of the Joint Commission's first meeting, co-chairman Shitrit summarized the purpose of the organization:

The combining of Israel's entrepreneurial spirit and the most up-to-date technology and the huge economic potential and natural resources of Kazakhstan is the goal of our cooperation. It should help both countries to attain a higher standard of living and stronger economies.⁵⁶⁴

It is worth drawing attention to the fact that the Kazakh delegation would travel to Jerusalem for official talks with the Israelis but Kazakhstan's position in the UN General Assembly on the status of Jerusalem remained firmly against Israel.⁵⁶⁵ With the exception of 1999,⁵⁶⁶ every time the General Assembly voted on the issue of Jerusalem from 1993 to 2000, Kazakhstan voted with Iran to call for an end to Israel's unilateral claim to Jerusalem. This would suggest that while Kazakhstan sought to

⁵⁶² "Motives of bilateral relations," <http://www.qodsna.com> (accessed 30 April 2006).

⁵⁶³ "About the Kazakhstan-Israeli relations," Statement of the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the State of Israel, n.d., <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>.

⁵⁶⁴ "Israeli Delegation Pays Visit," in FBIS-CE-93, pp. 69-70.

⁵⁶⁵ See Appendix One, UN General Assembly voting record on Middle East issues.

⁵⁶⁶ In 1999 Kazakhstan cast no ballot. Whether Kazakhstan was present and chose not to vote or was not present is not known from the UN's official records. However, the fact that the Kazakh delegation cast other ballots that day suggests that a decision was taken not to vote, although this cannot be known with certainty.

maintain an international position in line with other regional states and Muslim nations, in practice Kazakh foreign policy did not have problems with conducting official meetings with Israeli leaders in Jerusalem. This was certainly not lost on the Israelis, who viewed their meeting in Jerusalem as recognition by Kazakhstan Basic Law (1980): Jerusalem, Capital of Israel which claims all of Jerusalem as the complete and united capital of Israel.⁵⁶⁷

The silence of the Arabic and Persian press on these meetings in Jerusalem is noteworthy. Possible explanations for this include a tacit understanding that Kazakh policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was decidedly even-handed; a recognition that Kazakhstan maintained positive ties with Israel while simultaneously voting in favor of repeated UN General Assembly resolutions that called for an end to the occupation of Jerusalem; and an acknowledgement by Teheran that Kazakh-Iranian relations were in fact amicable. In any event, Kazakhstan's tacit recognition of Jerusalem did not complicate Almaty's relations with other Muslim states.

On 27 December 1995 Israel and Kazakhstan signed the Bilateral Treaty for the Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Foreign Investments. This agreement facilitated greater trade and investment by eliminating obstacles to profit removal. According to the Israeli Ministry of Finance, this agreement ensured compensation in the event of war, guaranteed capital repatriation in events of nationalization or expropriation, and prevented the unequal treatment of foreign investors. The treaty came into effect on 19 February 1997, and has since increased the flow of Israeli capital and investment into Kazakhstan.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁷ See http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1980_1989/Basic%20Law-%20Jerusalem-%20Capital%20of%20Israel (accessed 18 June 2006).

⁵⁶⁸ Data drawn from Israel Ministry of Finance, International Division, "Bilateral Treaties for the Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Foreign Investments," <http://www.mof.gov.il/beinle/talmor.htm> (accessed 19 June 2006).

Pace of Commercial Relations

Trade ties between the two nations developed quickly and Kazakhstan benefited from Israeli investments in both agriculture and high technology.⁵⁶⁹ During the first four years of the relationship Kazakhstan was Israel's primary trading partner in the region. In early April 1992 Kazakh Trade Minister Zheltikov traveled to Israel. It was announced on 2 April 1992—just seven days before the official announcement of formal diplomatic relations—that Israel and Kazakhstan would work together to develop greater commercial cooperation, increase trade relations, and expand industrial and technical collaborations.⁵⁷⁰ While in Israel, Zheltikov signed agreements for Israeli assistance in agricultural development, industrial renovation, and other training programs.⁵⁷¹

Israeli businesses enjoyed early success in Kazakhstan in a variety of projects, focused on both the agricultural and industrial sectors. Following Kazakhstan's independence, a number of Israeli firms entered the Kazakh market obviously with an eye to the benefits a large economy brimming with potential could offer. The enthusiasm of many Israeli entrepreneurs led them to make investments in former Soviet Central Asia, and in the immediate aftermath of independence Kazakhstan attracted the most attention. Israeli commercial activity began very quickly in Kazakhstan; within the first several months of the relationship, 18 Israeli companies had visited Kazakhstan to explore opportunities, and three were involved in significant business.⁵⁷² Two areas of Kazakhstan's dilapidated infrastructure that required the most attention were the agricultural and telecom sectors. It was in these

⁵⁶⁹ Tukumov, interview.

⁵⁷⁰ "Israel to help Kazakh agriculture and livestock breeding," *Kazakh Radio* (Almaty), in Kazakh, 1400 GMT 2 April 1992, in *BBC SWB*, SU/1351 A4/2[7] (9 April 1992).

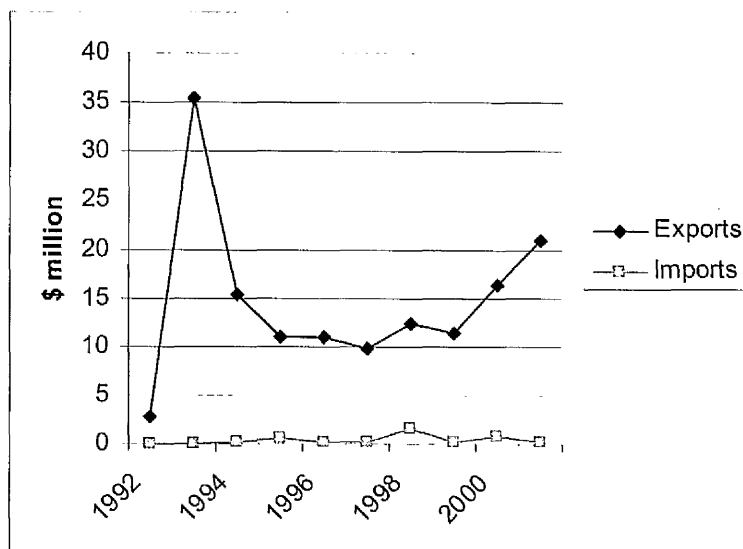
⁵⁷¹ Fedorchenko, "Kazakhstan-Israel," <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001, site discontinued).

⁵⁷² Hugh Carnegie, "Israel extends its arm to tie up central Asian links," *Financial Times*, 6 May 1992.

two areas that Israeli businesses were most active during the first period of the relationship (see Major Commercial Investment, 1992–1995, below).

During 1992, Israeli firms secured agreements with Kazakhstan for several billion dollars' worth of "economic collaboration" for the construction of chemical plants, the installation of irrigation facilities, and hospital renovations.⁵⁷³ Israeli firms were also retained to help "develop agriculture and livestock breeding and to train specialists."⁵⁷⁴

Chart 5.1 Israeli-Kazakh Trade, 1992–2001



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel).

Foreign trade turnover (see chart 5.1 and table 5.3) between Israel and Kazakhstan rose from \$2.8 million in 1992⁵⁷⁵ to \$35.5 million in 1993.⁵⁷⁶ These figures represent total Israeli exports to Kazakhstan; in calendar years 1992⁵⁷⁷ and

⁵⁷³ Irina D. Zviagelskaya, "Central Asia and Transcaucasia: New Geopolitics," in *Central Asia and Transcaucasia: Ethnicity and Conflict*, ed. Vitaly V. Naumkin (London, 1994), p. 153.

⁵⁷⁴ "Israel to help Kazakh," in *BBC SWB*, SU/1351 A4/2[7].

⁵⁷⁵ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 44*, Central Bureau of Statistics (Jerusalem, 1993), chart 8.5, pp. 266-267.

⁵⁷⁶ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 46*, Central Bureau of Statistics (Jerusalem, 1995), chart 8.5, pp. 272-273.

⁵⁷⁷ The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics figures from 1992 begin in May and not January.

1993 no Israeli imports from Kazakhstan were recorded.⁵⁷⁸ This twelve-fold increase in recorded exports represents the single greatest increase in Israeli-Kazakh ties during the time period covered in this thesis. In 1994 and 1995 Israeli exports dropped, while Israeli imports from Kazakhstan began to rise slowly. Israel exported \$15.3 million worth of goods and imported \$0.2 million from Kazakhstan in 1994,⁵⁷⁹ and in 1995 trade figures were \$11 million and \$0.5 million respectively for exports and imports.⁵⁸⁰ Commercial trade activities demonstrate the desire of Israeli firms to operate in Kazakhstan over the course of the relationship.

As evidenced by these figures, at the beginning of this period commercial relations were developing extremely well. In recognition of this, the widely read Economist Intelligence Unit country profile of Israel commented that economic relations between Kazakhstan and Israel “were flourishing.”⁵⁸¹ Acknowledgement by the *EIU* was significant because many governments and multinational corporations are consumers of such data. A private sector analysis also noted the varied Israeli commercial interests in Kazakhstan. Israel was identified in a confidential petroleum industry report on Kazakhstan as one of the “countries which have begun to play more important roles in different economic sectors.”⁵⁸²

Table 5.3 Israeli-Kazakh Trade, 1992-1995
(in Millions of Dollars)

	1992	1993	1994	1995
Exports	\$2.8	\$35.5	\$15.3	\$11
Imports	\$0	\$0	\$0.2	\$0.5

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel).

⁵⁷⁸ See *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 44*, chart 8.5, p. 266 and *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 46*, chart 8.5, p. 272.

⁵⁷⁹ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 46*, chart 8.5, pp. 272-273.

⁵⁸⁰ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 47*, Central Bureau of Statistics (Jerusalem, 1996), chart 8.5, pp. 223-223.

⁵⁸¹ The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Israel: Country Profile 1992-93* (London, 1993), p. 9.

⁵⁸² “Kazakhstan: Social and Political Backdrop,” draft version of a confidential petroleum industry report, n.p., n.d., p. 19. Document in the collection of the author.

These figures represent the initial large-scale boom in trade turnover between Israel and Kazakhstan in the first years of the latter's independence. From 1994, trade levels decreased. This was the result of several factors, including the end of the initial excitement of Israeli businesses for opportunities in Kazakhstan, a difficulty in generating continued trade opportunities for Israeli firms, an economic slowdown in the Kazakh economy, and the fact that much had already been exported by Israel into Kazakhstan.

Development Assistance

Israeli development assistance to Central Asia was significant from the outset. In the case of Kazakhstan, development assistance should be considered primarily a component of economic policy and not of diplomatic policy. To be sure, development assistance was intended to advance the political objective of creating a strong bond with Kazakhstan. Nonetheless, it is significant that such aid was intended to further Israel's commercial interests.

MASHAV worked closely with USAID in Kazakhstan. In early July 1992, US Secretary of State Baker's idea of joining American funds and Israeli experts to work on development projects in Central Asia was primarily meant to combat the potential rise of Islamic fundamentalism.⁵⁸³ In September 1992 the first combined US-Israeli "agricultural aid delegation" headed to Kazakhstan in order to identify projects for combined assistance programs.⁵⁸⁴ This was followed one month later by a similar US-Israeli team that investigated potential public health projects they could assist. Further projects were found in the agricultural sector.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸³ *Israel Yearbook & Almanac 1993: Events of 1992*, Volume 47 (Jerusalem, 1994), p. 84.

⁵⁸⁴ "Kazakhstan deal," *Israeli foreign affairs* VIII, no. 10-11 (31 December 1992), p. 8.

⁵⁸⁵ *Israel Yearbook & Almanac 1993*, p. 84.

In addition to development assistance, the republics also received direct economic assistance from the United States delivered via Israel. In 1993 Kazakhstan received \$400 million in such direct aid, granted to Israel for the specific purpose of "countering Iran's influence in Central Asia."⁵⁸⁶ Plans were also made to assist Kazakhstan in developing and modernizing its aging Soviet-era industrial facilities through the introduction of Israeli technology.⁵⁸⁷

Israeli aid was not an altruistic endeavor. This assistance was designed to staunch Iranian influence and prevent the emergence of Islamist threats. An important secondary consideration for Israeli donations to Kazakhstan was to plant the seeds of future Israeli-Kazakh commercial ventures. One of the major benefits for Israeli businesses was that the changes were subtle and occurred over a period of time, making the Kazakh infrastructure compatible with Israeli commercial products and processes.

This strategic investment in Kazakhstan was intended to help facilitate long-term cooperation. In the long view, Kazakhstan was projected to become a technological hotbed where Israeli know-how would be combined with Kazakh raw materials to produce hi-tech goods for export to other countries at a sizable profit. In the early 1990s, it was hoped that this strategy would combat the flight of educated and productive Kazakh residents,⁵⁸⁸ especially those who had previously been employed in the Soviet nuclear and other weapons programs. This strategy also sought to close yet another avenue of potential Iranian cooperation with Kazakhstan, and was an additional attempt to further isolate Iran; it reinforced the Israeli

⁵⁸⁶ Zviagelskaya, "Central Asia and Transcaucasia," p. 153.

⁵⁸⁷ "Israel to help Kazakh," in *BBC SWB*, SU/1351 A4/2[7].

⁵⁸⁸ Fedorchenko, "Kazakhstan-Israel," <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001, site discontinued).

government's desire to prevent Kazakhs from seeking employment in countries of concern such as Iran.

Major Commercial Investment, 1992–1995

Israeli commercial policy toward Kazakhstan from the beginning of 1992 through the end of 1995 involved significant activity in a number of sectors. Because of the often overlapping nature of for-profit business ventures and Israeli aid projects, these two aspects of Israeli policy toward Kazakhstan are addressed in this section. The areas in which Israel was the most heavily involved during this period of the relationship were the agricultural and telecom sectors, with additional projects that took place in the industrial and energy sectors. Israeli involvement included the export of drip irrigation technologies; investment in the agricultural, industrial, and energy sectors; the manufacture of foodstuffs; and animal husbandry. Discussions on commercial air links between Almaty and Tel Aviv were also held during this period. Many of the Israeli projects in Kazakhstan as listed in table 5.4; some of the more important projects from 1992 to 1995 are discussed below.

Table 5.4 Major Israeli Projects, 1992–1995

Year	Project	Sector	Business(es) Involved	Contract size (where known)
1992	Drip irrigation project, Shymkent	Agricultural	Eisenberg Group	\$160m
1992	Cotton processing facility	Agricultural	Eisenberg Group	NA
1992	Plastic film plant	Industrial	Eisenberg Group	NA
1992	Telephony expansion project	Telecom	Motorola Israel	NA
1992	Four turnkey agricultural upgrade projects	Agricultural	Merhav Group	\$35m
1993	Project financing: line of credit to purchase agricultural equipment and services	Agricultural	Bank Hapoalim	\$80m
1993	Tomato paste JV	Agricultural	Pri-Nir; Teva Tari	\$2.5m
1993	Creation of training center for Kazakh Ministry of Communication	Telecom	Degem; Tele-tech	\$1m
1994	Build satellite communication system for domestic and international use	Telecom	Gilat	\$4.6m
1995	Management contract for Karaganda Metallurgical Complex	Industrial	Eisenberg Financial Group	NA
1995	2 refinery upgrade contracts	Energy	Israel Corporation	NA
1995	Ancillary services	Energy	Lapidoth Oil Prospectors Corporation	NA
1995	Construction of 4 food processing and agricultural production facilities	Agricultural	Merhav Group	\$60m

Sources: Israel Ministry of Industry & Trade; *Israeli foreign affairs*; *Israel Business Today*; *Israel Year Book & Almanac*; Abadi (2006); Aras (1998); Kazakh Embassy in Israel; author's field work in Israel and Kazakhstan.

As detailed in the preceding chapter on Israeli-Uzbek relations, the reputation of Israeli drip irrigation technology had a high reputation in the region. As in Uzbekistan, there was an eagerness in Kazakhstan to harness Israeli expertise in agricultural development. Israeli firms moved quickly to implement advanced technologies and installing drip irrigation systems in order to boost cotton production.

Soon after Kazakhstan's independence, many enthusiastic Israeli entrepreneurs flocked to Kazakhstan with hopes of exporting Israeli irrigation technologies.⁵⁸⁹

By the end of 1992 the Eisenberg Group had signed a \$160 million irrigation deal and was in possession of \$2 billion worth of letters of intent for additional contacts.⁵⁹⁰ This deal came less than a month after a similar project was abandoned in Tajikistan due to the civil war.⁵⁹¹ The project created an irrigation system on a vast site of 200 square kilometers of cotton and agricultural fields in Shymkent province near the Uzbek border, a factory to build irrigation pipes, and made provisions for technicians.⁵⁹² Of the \$160 million total contract value, between \$20 million and \$30 million was paid by foreign sources.⁵⁹³ The remainder was guaranteed by the IFTRIC⁵⁹⁴ which would place the officially guaranteed portion of the total value at around the 65 per cent level asserted by Fedorchenko in his analysis of Israeli-Kazakh economic relations.⁵⁹⁵ This arrangement highlights the support given by the Israeli government to private sector commercial concerns in its bid to draw Israel and Almaty closer together during the first years of the relationship. Eisenberg's investments in Kazakhstan were the most successful in establishing an Israeli economic and political presence in Kazakhstan.⁵⁹⁶

Other firms were also active in the agricultural sector such as Pri-Nir, a joint Israeli-Kazakh venture run by former Deputy Mayor of Tel Aviv Michael Roe, and

⁵⁸⁹ Michael Reynolds, PhD (Assistant Professor of Near East Studies, Princeton University), discussion with the author, 19 May 2006, Princeton, New Jersey. See also Fedorchenko, "Kazakhstan-Israel," <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001, site discontinued).

⁵⁹⁰ Philip Robins, "The Middle East and Central Asia," in *The Central Asia and Its Neighbours*, ed. Peter Ferdinand (London, 1994), p. 72.

⁵⁹¹ Robins, "Middle East and Central Asia," p. 72.

⁵⁹² See "Kazakhstan deal," p. 8, and Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition*, p. 436.

⁵⁹³ *The Jerusalem Post*, 5 December 1992.

⁵⁹⁴ "Shaul Eisenberg emerges," p. 4.

⁵⁹⁵ Fedorchenko, "Kazakhstan-Israel," <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001, site discontinued).

⁵⁹⁶ "Kazakhstan deal," p. 8.

former Kazakh Prime Minister Tereshchenko, and Israeli businessman Jacob Cheskala.⁵⁹⁷ Netafim, another firm, was successful in installing drip irrigation systems throughout Kazakhstan.⁵⁹⁸ In February 1993 the Merhav Group increased its investments in Kazakhstan four-fold, from \$40 million to \$160 million.⁵⁹⁹ Through the use of Israeli agricultural and irrigation expertise, food production increased many-fold over the previous levels achieved by the Soviets; for example, tomato yields were six times greater than before.⁶⁰⁰ As early as 1992, Israel agreed to train Kazakh specialists in livestock breeding and animal husbandry and this yielded results quickly.⁶⁰¹ Israeli programs increased milk production; work done by the Lachist firm and the Davy Foundation reduced milk production expenses and increased the yield by 60 percent.⁶⁰²

With respect to the telecom sector, Israel was quite active. Israeli firms completed numerous projects to upgrade and expand Kazakh telecommunications. The most notable contract followed immediately after Communications Minister Pinhasi's January 1992 official visit to Almaty which preceded official relations. Originally from Kabul,⁶⁰³ Pinhasi was the first official Israeli to travel to Kazakhstan on governmental business. While in Almaty, Pinhasi called for greater economic

⁵⁹⁷ See "About Kazakhstan-Israeli relations," <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>, and "Motives of bilateral relations," <http://www.qodsna.com> (accessed 30 April 2006).

⁵⁹⁸ Colin Barraclough, "Muslim Republics Welcome Israeli Irrigation Expertise," *Christian Science Monitor* (23 September 1992).

⁵⁹⁹ "Shaul Eisenberg emerges," p. 4.

⁶⁰⁰ George E. Gruen, "Dynamic Progress in Turkish-Israeli Relations," *Israel Affairs* 1, no. 4 (summer 1995): p. 56.

⁶⁰¹ "Israel to help Kazakh," in *BBC SWB*, SU/1351 A4/2[7].

⁶⁰² Bülent Aras, *The New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position* (London, 2002), p. 63, citing the Turkish Foreign Economic Relations Board, Summary Notes of the Conference on possible cooperation among Turkish-Israeli firms in the Central Asian republics, Istanbul, 10 December 1996, p. 6.

⁶⁰³ *Israel Yearbook & Almanac 1993*, p. 188.

cooperation between Israel and Kazakhstan and expressed his government's support for President Nazarbayev's efforts to transform the economy.⁶⁰⁴

The commercial venture to upgrade the existing telecommunication system and create a direct-dial satellite link between the two nations was the first known successful Israeli commercial deal in any of the five Central Asian republics.⁶⁰⁵ Pinhasi's agreement with the Kazakhs also called for the creation of joint ventures to manufacture telephone equipment.⁶⁰⁶ Within several months of recognizing independent Kazakhstan, Israel had completed this contract, drastically improving the ability of the two states to communicate.

International commercial telephone calls began to be routed via Tel Aviv through this satellite link in April 1995.⁶⁰⁷ This corresponds to the beginning of the second period of the relationship between Israel and Kazakhstan when diplomatic interaction decreased, and official use of the channel declined. For Kazakhstan, the creation of a satellite connection with Israel was a first. As of January 2005, the only other cities to enjoy satellite links with Almaty were London, Paris, Istanbul, Frankfurt, Astana, Sydney, Seoul, and Tokyo.⁶⁰⁸ As will be demonstrated Israel continued to make significant improvements to the telecommunication network of Kazakhstan throughout the first decade of Kazakh independence.

In the industrial sector, the Eisenberg Financial Group won a management contract for the privatized Karaganda Metallurgical Complex (Karmet). However, after discovering that the facility's debts were double what had been reported, the Group reneged on the contract. It should be recalled that Kazakhstan's industrial

⁶⁰⁴ "Direct Communication Link with Israel Formed," *Interfax* (Moscow), in English, in FBIS-CE-92 (23 January 1992), p. 99.

⁶⁰⁵ Saivetz, "Central Asia: Emerging Relations," p. 317.

⁶⁰⁶ "Direct Communication Link," in FBIS-CE-92, p. 99.

⁶⁰⁷ *Israel Year Book & Almanac: Events of 1995*, Volume 50 (Jerusalem, 1996), p. 208.

⁶⁰⁸ Data obtained by the author on field research in Kazakhstan, January 2005.

infrastructure required extensive refurbishment and the replacement of outdated equipment, a fact well known to most international investors.⁶⁰⁹

Significantly, Saul Eisenberg's ability to invest in the Kazakh market was not affected by this episode, and he and his firms continued to do business in Kazakhstan. Only one conclusion can be drawn from this fact: the Kazakh government and the management of the Karaganda Metallurgical Complex were aware of Karmet's true solvency and made the decision not to jeopardize future investments from either Eisenberg or other Israeli investors, private or public. As the Kazakh government was solely responsible for privatizing state enterprises, the decision not to engage in retributive actions directed against Eisenberg or other Israeli investors attests to Almaty's desire to ensure further development of the Israeli-Kazakh relationship and continued Israeli investment in the economy. This was especially true as the Kazakh economy continued to slow down during the mid- to late-1990s. This episode demonstrated the importance Almaty placed on positive economic relations with Israel.

Early in the relationship, Israel began to invest in the energy and power generation sector in Kazakhstan. In the 1993 meeting among Kazakh President Nazarbayev and Israeli Science and Economic Minister Shitrit and Israeli Energy Minister Amnon Rubenstein, the three men discussed Israeli strategic investment in oil and gas production and power generation.⁶¹⁰ Among the deals they discussed were investment in two large power plants in Karaganda,⁶¹¹ two refinery upgrade

⁶⁰⁹ "Kazakhstan: Social and Political Backdrop," p. 19.

⁶¹⁰ Fedorchenko, "Kazakhstan-Israel," <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001).

⁶¹¹ Mey-Ami, "Israel in Relation."

contracts,⁶¹² and ancillary services provided by the state-owned Lapidoth Oil Prospectors Corporation in Kazakhstan.⁶¹³

Israeli investment in Kazakhstan took place before and after the establishment of diplomatic relations, suggesting that the Israeli government backed the private sector in furtherance of Israeli policy towards Kazakhstan. The activities of the Israeli private sector advanced the government's agenda. One can not otherwise help but wonder why Israeli private concerns would so quickly enter a foreign market that was only three months out of a decades-long disastrous experience suffering under a centrally planned economy. The Israeli government's backing of private sector's involvement partially explains the confidence of Israeli businesses in the as yet unknown Kazakh market.

SECURITY COOPERATION: ANECDOTES, PERCEPTIONS, AND REALITIES

Broadly speaking, security cooperation between Israel and Almaty during the first phase of their relationship covered three areas. The two most significant issues were halting the spread of nuclear proliferation and curbing Iranian influence. The third issue involved the provision of material support for the new Kazakh National Guard.

It is extremely challenging to acquire accurate and attributable data regarding security cooperation between Israel and Kazakhstan, though it must be noted that there is more open source material available regarding Kazakhstan than Uzbekistan. Unlike Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan has not experienced a sustained and well-organized terrorist threat; nor have Israeli personnel, interests, or facilities in Kazakhstan been targets of terrorist violence as they have been in Uzbekistan.

⁶¹² "Shaul Eisenberg emerges," p. 4.

⁶¹³ *Israel Yearbook & Almanac 1996: Events of 1995*, p. 213. Until early 1996, Lapidoth Oil Prospectors Corp. was an Israeli state enterprise.

Israeli Intelligence Activity in Kazakhstan

Anecdotal evidence exists to suggest that Israeli, Western, and Kazakh intelligence and security services cooperated to combat nuclear proliferation and to monitor and track former Soviet weapons engineers in Kazakhstan. It was in the national security interests of both Israel and Kazakhstan to prevent the proliferation of WMDs. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, President Nazarbayev repeatedly spoke out against nuclear weapons. Furthermore, Israeli policy toward Kazakhstan—and indeed all of Central Asia—was concerned about the spread of such weapons and technologies.

Although Israel was insistent that Kazakh WMDs and expertise in them not spread to countries such as Iran, there is no evidence to suggest that Israeli pressure had an impact on the decision of the Kazakh government to renounce nuclear weapons. In fact one senior Kazakh Foreign Ministry official confided that there were no demands from Israel to remove the Soviet-era nuclear arms.⁶¹⁴

Halting Nuclear Proliferation

Unique among the Central Asian states, when Kazakhstan gained independence it was a de facto nuclear power, possessing many strategic Soviet-era weapons and installations. This factor influenced how nations dealt with independent Kazakhstan. For many reasons—such as those outlined in chapter three—Israeli leaders were especially worried about the fate of Soviet-era nuclear weapons. This constituted Israel's essential concern in Central Asia. I agree with Abadi when he observed that, as a result, "the Israelis were particularly concerned and therefore saw

⁶¹⁴ Interview by the author with a senior Kazakh Foreign Ministry official, 27 January 2005, Almaty, Kazakhstan. This official was familiar with his country's relationship with Israel and the decision to remove Soviet-era nuclear weapons.

an urgent need to normalize relations with the republics of the former Soviet Union. This fear can partly account for Israel's feverish activity in the region and for its intense efforts to establish diplomatic relations with Kazakhstan."⁶¹⁵ This prime concern might also help explain why one of the first discussions between Israel and Kazakhstan concerned the creation of a direct satellite telephone link.

Israel's concern about the Soviet weapons left on Kazakh soil after the collapse of the Soviet Union encompassed more than just the fate of Soviet battlefield weapons; Soviet-era special nuclear materials and civilian atomic industries were also cause for alarm. The threats inherit in the detritus of the Soviet Union's massive military were extensive, and included rumors of lost nuclear warheads left unexploded and abandoned on test ranges on Kazakh soil.⁶¹⁶ Freedman's very early analysis of the relationship was correct when he asserted that for Israel "first and foremost was the fear that the nuclear weapons in Kazakhstan might find their way into the hands of Israel's Middle Eastern enemies."⁶¹⁷

Cooperation between Israel and Kazakhstan existed prior to the removal of Kazakhstan's nuclear arsenal. Following its removal, the security relationship between Israel and Kazakhstan continued to be strong, focused on tracking former Soviet nuclear experts and monitoring sources of weapons grade fuel and special nuclear materials.

Claims of Iranian Attempts to Acquire Kazakh Nukes

Shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many stories began to appear in the world press about Soviet-era nuclear weapons and technologies slipping out of the

⁶¹⁵ Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition*, p. 437.

⁶¹⁶ See Murat Laumulin, "Kazakhstan's Nuclear Policy and the Control of Nuclear Weapons," in *The Nuclear Challenge in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. George Quester (London, 1995).

⁶¹⁷ Freedman, "Israel and Central Asia," p. 17.

Commonwealth of Independent States and to such states as Islamic Republic of Iran. The majority of these questionable reports focused on Kazakhstan. While part of the Soviet Union, the Kazak SSR was one of the centers of the Soviet nuclear weapons program, hosting everything from the extraction and production of uranium yellowcake through to enrichment and testing at the nuclear testing facility at Semipalatinsk.

It was feared that the acquisition by another nation of a Soviet-era nuclear device located in Kazakhstan could be manifested in several possible ways. Some of the scenarios that were envisioned included the sale of a nuclear device to the highest bidder by the cash-strapped Kazakh government, the 'sharing' of such resources by sympathetic 'Muslim' officials, or outright theft. Acknowledging this fact, one author aptly noted several years into the Israeli-Kazakh relationship that "Israel's fear stems from the possibility of the transfer of nuclear weapons and technology to Iran."⁶¹⁸

Iran figured prominently within these scenarios, partly due to the general fears of Western observers and partly as a result of an ambitious attempt by the Iranian government to explore such so-called sharing with Kazakhstan. There was significant concern that the clerical regime in Teheran would achieve—or at least advance—its nuclear aspirations through the application of Soviet nuclear expertise. Iran was reported in 1992 to be "actively shopping"⁶¹⁹ for nuclear technologies around the now-independent Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union.

One such allegation was published in early 1992 when the newspaper *Al-Watan al-Arabi* "claimed that Iran had bought nuclear weapons from an 'Islamic republic' in the former Soviet Union and had recruited Soviet nuclear scientists."

⁶¹⁸ Bülent Aras, "Post-Cold War Realities: Israel's Strategy in Azerbaijan and Central Asia," *Middle East Policy*, vol. 5, no. 4 (January 1998): p. 78.

⁶¹⁹ Andrew Cockburn and Leslie Cockburn, *One Point Safe: The Terrifying Threat of Russia's Unwanted Nuclear Arsenal* (London, 1997), p. 145.

Kazakhstan vehemently denied this allegation, as did Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmud Vaezi while in Almaty to open Teheran's new embassy. Iran's English language *Kayhan International*, known to be close to hard-line elements in the establishment, voided its opinion vehemently on the controversy, claiming that Iran's interest was "not out of a desire to buy nuclear bombs but to gain a foothold in a mutually beneficial future."⁶²⁰

Western and Israeli fears of Iranian intentions and desires were justified through the repeated discovery of evidence suggesting that Iranian agents had visited many sites that had hosted the Soviet Union's large scale nuclear and biological warfare programs.⁶²¹ Such evidence took a variety of forms, including the discovery of shipping containers at the Ulba Metallurgical Plant in Ust-Kamenogorsk (Kazakhstan) prepared for shipment to Iran.⁶²²

During the Soviet period, the Ulba Metallurgical Plant produced nuclear fuel pellets for the Soviet navy's abandoned Alfa submarine project. Despite the fact that this ill-conceived project was terminated many years before, the highly enriched bomb-grade uranium fuel pellets remained stored at Ust-Kamenogorsk for several years after Kazakh independence. In 1993 the American government launched *Project Sapphire*, a secret program to secure and remove this highly enriched uranium (HEU) from Kazakhstan and transfer it to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. In all, approximately 600 kg was transferred to American custody, enough for approximately 24 nuclear bombs.⁶²³

⁶²⁰ Peter Feuillerade, "Searching for economic synergy," *The Middle East* (March 1992), p. 34.

⁶²¹ Reports of Iranian interest in nuclear components and technologies in Kazakhstan generated enough concern that the CIA's Deputy Director for Intelligence was receiving reports each week detailing Iranian 'shopping' expeditions that were focused primarily on Kazakhstan. For more information, see Cockburn and Cockburn, *One Point Safe*, p. 145.

⁶²² Cockburn and Cockburn, *One Point Safe*, p. 161.

⁶²³ Based on the rough estimate of 25 kg of HEU per each bomb.

During this program, American experts taking part in *Project Sapphire* at Ust-Kamenogorsk discovered the containers ready for shipment to Iran. Kazakh officials insisted that the shipment bound for Teheran did not contain any HEU and comprised only beryllium. In fact, the beryllium was never shipped because it was discovered by Americans officials before it could be sent.⁶²⁴ It is important to note that beryllium is a nuclear fuel additive⁶²⁵ and is an essential component in nuclear weapon designs; it is also used as well in other defense and aerospace systems such as missiles, high speed aircraft, and satellites.⁶²⁶ Today, the Ulba Metallurgical Plant is no longer involved in the weaponization of nuclear technologies. However, as the largest uranium enrichment complex in the Commonwealth of Independent States,⁶²⁷ it is still an active component in Kazakhstan's peaceful, civilian nuclear program.

One of the most explosive allegations of Iranian attempts to secure Kazakh nuclear weapons came in August 1992 "when *Pravda* quoted an Israeli military journal's accusations that Kazakhstan had sold three atomic bombs to Iran."⁶²⁸ Kazakh officials strenuously denied these allegations and to date no evidence has ever emerged to confirm this report.⁶²⁹ In fact, as recently as April 2006 former Mossad Director-General Efraim Halevy firmly dismissed these stories as having no basis in fact;⁶³⁰ nevertheless, at the time, the fear was real. Moreover,

⁶²⁴ Seymour Hersh, "The Iran Game," *The New Yorker*, 3 December 2003, http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/011203fa_FACT.

⁶²⁵ Akiner, "Soviet Military Legacy in Kazakhstan," <http://www.janes.com>.

⁶²⁶ For more information, consult the entry on "beryllium," available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beryllium> (accessed 27 May 2006).

⁶²⁷ Akiner, "Soviet Military Legacy in Kazakhstan," <http://www.janes.com>.

⁶²⁸ Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "New Frontiers: Iran, the GCC and the CCARs," in *From the Gulf to Central Asia: Players in the New Great Game*, ed. Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Exeter, 1994), p. 103.

⁶²⁹ "Kazakhstan Denies Reported Supply of Nuclear Warheads to Iran," *Interfax* (15 April 1998), FBIS translation abstract available on the NIS Nuclear Trafficking Database (hereafter NIS NTD), <http://www.nti.org/db/nistr Traff/1998/19980170.htm>. See also Ehteshami, "New Frontiers," p. 103.

⁶³⁰ Efraim Halevy (former Mossad Director-General), telephone interview with the author, 10 April 2006, London, United Kingdom.

James Rubin, spokesman for the US Department of State, told the *Jerusalem Post* that back in 1992 the United States had investigated reports that Iran had purchased nuclear weapons in Kazakhstan, and determined "there was no evidence to substantiate such claims." Rubin said that while the United States remains "concerned" about Iranian efforts to acquire a nuclear capability, "we have no information suggesting that Iran is in possession of nuclear warheads acquired from the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan."⁶³¹

Similar reports were, however, also printed in the *European*,⁶³² *The Los Angeles Times*,⁶³³ *Izvestiya*,⁶³⁴ and *The Jerusalem Post*,⁶³⁵ variously citing Russian intelligence, classified Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps communication documents in Israeli custody, an exiled Iranian scientist, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the Kazakh Foreign Ministry, former Soviet Foreign Minister Edward Shevardnadze, and an unidentified Egyptian newspaper. The ultimate falsity of these claims notwithstanding, this allegation is important because it highlights the *fear* of such developments in the international community, and it very aptly demonstrates the level of concern in Israel regarding such a transfer of nuclear weapons from Kazakhstan to Iran. As this initial report originally allegedly came from an Israeli military journal, it is indicative of the extreme concerns at the time within Israel's military and security establishment.

⁶³¹ NIS NTD article abstract of "Iran Said To Obtain Four Nuclear Bombs From CIS Republic," 9 April 1998, pp. 1-2, in FBIS-TAC-98 (17 April 1998), p. 107, referencing Steve Rodan, "Iran Paid \$25m for Nuclear Weapons, Documents Show," *The Jerusalem Post*, 10 April 1998, NIS NTD, <http://www.nti.org/db/nistralf/1998/19980150.htm>.

⁶³² "Iran Has N-Bomb," *The European*, 20 April 1992, pp. 1-2; abstract, NIS NTD, www.nti.org/db/nistralf/1992/19920620.htm.

⁶³³ "Fears Grow that Soviet A-Arms Are on Market," *The Los Angeles Times*, 11 January 1992; abstract, NIS NTD, <http://www.nti.org/db/nistralf/1992/19920060.htm>.

⁶³⁴ "Kazakhstan Will Not Trade Nuclear Weapons," *Izvestiya*, 29 January 1992, citing a *Daily Mail* article discussing Iranian visits to Kazakhstan and the possible sale of nuclear weapons and delivery systems. Abstract, NIS NTD, <http://www.nti.org/db/nistralf/1992/19920130.htm>.

⁶³⁵ Steve Rodan, "Iran Paid \$25m for Nuclear Weapons, Documents Show," *The Jerusalem Post*, 10 April 1998.

Israeli Monitoring of Kazakh Nuclear Technologies

In his memoirs, Ambassador Levin states that the Israeli Embassy in Moscow was receiving “an increasing amount of information on the sale and theft of nuclear warheads from the former Soviet arsenal”⁶³⁶ located in Kazakhstan. Levin does not indicate in his memoirs where he obtained this information. It remains a credible possibility that Israeli security and intelligence agencies were involved in the investigation of this information and in the collection of further data concerning the location of nuclear arms on Kazakh territory. It is extremely likely, although only anecdotal evidence exists to corroborate this position, that Israeli intelligence services, eager to collect as much information as possible about loose Soviet nukes, would cooperate with Western and Kazakh intelligence agencies.

Levin also writes that similar stories “came directly to me from Vice President Alexander Rutskoi’s staff, which was more disturbing.”⁶³⁷ This statement indicates that there was some official cooperation and sharing of information and intelligence on this subject between Israeli officials and their Russian counterparts. Security in Central Asia following the collapse of the Soviet Union was of course a major concern for the Russian government. The feared combination of radical political Islam and nuclear technology fanned old concerns for national security in the Russian core of the former Soviet Union.

In his 1998 article in *Middle East Policy*, Bülent Aras quotes “a report prepared in France” which claims that the American Central Intelligence Agency and Israel’s Mossad cooperated to “keep a close eye” on nuclear experts in Kazakhstan.⁶³⁸ If this allegation were to prove true, and if the CIA and Mossad were to be effective in

⁶³⁶ Aryeh Levin, *Envoy to Moscow: Memoirs of an Israeli Ambassador, 1988-1992* (London, 1996), p. 355.

⁶³⁷ Levin, *Envoy to Moscow*, p. 355.

⁶³⁸ Aras, “Post-Cold War Realities,” p. 78.

this endeavor, it would need the cooperation of their Kazakh colleagues to facilitate their success—or at the least Kazakh acknowledgement as a courtesy to a liaison service. This would therefore imply that the American, the Israeli, and the Kazakh intelligence services cooperated in this endeavor. Some sources have hinted at this being the case; however, this cooperation remains only a possibility, and is not publicly documented in the open source literature.

Implications for Israel

By April 1995, Kazakhstan had signed and ratified the NPT and completed the removal of all Soviet nuclear weapons. Kazakhstan's decision to renounce nuclear weapons and to voluntarily participate in the safe removal of its Soviet-era weapons systems carried with it a particularly relevance with regards to Israel's own 'undeclared' nuclear arsenal—a point which was not lost on Nazarbayev. Capisani observed that at the time Kazakhstan gave up its nuclear capability,

Nazarbaev stated, "If we were to proclaim ourselves a nuclear power, that would be giving other countries like Iran, Pakistan, North Korea, or Israel the green light to gather atomic arms. We do not want to be the nation to instigate such a process. We have suffered too much at the hands of the nuclear industry near the Semipalatinsk polygon where, under the old regime, approximately 500,000 people were unknowingly exposed to radiation. This was a crime committed against the Kazak population."⁶³⁹

Kazakhstan's decision to become a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty further solidified its position vis-à-vis the possession of nuclear arms.

⁶³⁹ Giampaolo R. Capisani, *The Handbook of Central Asia: A Comprehensive Survey of the New Republics* (London, 2000), p. 9.

Perception of Iranian-Backed Fundamentalism

A second striking example of security cooperation between Israel and Kazakhstan had to do with Iran. Specifically, both Israel and Kazakhstan shared similar concerns regarding the potential danger of Iranian-inspired Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia. Kazakh officials expressed their concerns to Foreign Minister Peres during a September 1992 delegation visit to Israel.⁶⁴⁰ Iran and Iranian inspired or backed extremism, in part for the reasons outlined in chapter three, was viewed by many in the early 1990s as the main source of these concerns, and as noted above, these concerns were closely tied to the ultimate disposition of Kazakhstan's nuclear arms.

Abadi notes that Nazarbayev went to significant lengths to "allay Israeli fears"⁶⁴¹ that Kazakh WMDs would end up in the control of Israel's enemies. In early 1992 "Nazarbayev gave an interview to one of Israel's major newspapers, *Yediot Aharonot*, in which he said, 'As for the nuclear weapons in our possession, you need not worry. They are meticulously guarded, and it is absolutely impossible to sneak them across our borders.'"⁶⁴² This sentiment was echoed in September 1992, during Kazakh Prime Minister Tereshchenko's three-day official visit to Israel. He reiterated Nazarbayev's sentiments when he stated, "Nuclear weapons will not be sold to Iran or any other country. Kazakhstan is peace loving. Israel has nothing to worry about."⁶⁴³

Abadi further notes that "the Israelis continued to suspect that Kazakhstan was selling nuclear weapons to Iran and some Third World countries,"⁶⁴⁴ although there has never emerged any documentation to support these Israeli concerns. In fact, many

⁶⁴⁰ "Israel said to be covertly arming Azerbaijan," *Israeli foreign affairs* VII, no. 9 (4 November 1992), p. 5.

⁶⁴¹ Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition*, p. 438.

⁶⁴² Freedman, "Israel and Central Asia," p. 17.

⁶⁴³ Freedman, "Israel and Central Asia," p. 18, quoting Asher Wallfish, *The Jerusalem Post*, 8 September 1992.

⁶⁴⁴ Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition*, p. 438.

in the national security establishment such as former Mossad Director Halevy have now dismissed these fears as baseless.⁶⁴⁵ Nonetheless these concerns in large part drove Israel to actively engage Kazakhstan on related security issues. For their part, Kazakh officials worked very hard to reassure the Israeli government that such allegations were untrue. Some reports have stated that Kazakhstan permitted Israel to access nuclear materials on its soil.⁶⁴⁶ While these claims have not been verified, they provide interesting anecdotal support to the *perceived* closeness of the Israeli-Kazakh relationship.

During Nazarbayev's visit to Israel in December 1995, he informed Foreign Minister Barak that "they 'share Israel's stand on the Iranian issue and [will] work to prevent Iranian influence in Kazakhstan.'"⁶⁴⁷ It should be remembered that Kazakhstan (and Tajikistan) joined with Uzbekistan in protesting Iran's politicization of the 1996 Economic Cooperation Organization summit in Ashgabat because of Teheran's "verbal attacks on Israel."⁶⁴⁸ Nonetheless, Kazakhstan has enjoyed open and neighborly relations with Iran and has used this relationship with the regime in Teheran to advance Israeli objectives as demonstrated in chapter six.

Uniform Assistance

The final aspect of cooperation between the two states concerned non-lethal assistance. When the Kazakh National Guard was seeking to redesign its uniforms to reflect its break from the Red Army, one of the nations it turned to for assistance was Israel. This in part due to the fact that Kazakhstan had only "two out of 55 specialist soft military equipment factories in the former Soviet Union." Israel excels in the

⁶⁴⁵ Halevy, telephone interview.

⁶⁴⁶ Dmitri Vertkin, "Kazakhstan: Independence and Armed Forces," *Defense Analysis* 10 (April 1994), p. 69, cited in Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition*, p. 438.

⁶⁴⁷ Aras, "Post-Cold War Realities," p. 77, quoting *BBC SWB*, SU 2425 (4 October 1995), p. G/5.

⁶⁴⁸ Lowell Bezanis, "ECO Summit Rumpus," *OMRI Daily Digest* 2, no. 94 (15 May 1996).

area of specialist soft military equipment. In addition to the redesign of the uniforms, in mid-1994 negotiations were held with Israeli firms to provide equipment and technology to the Kazakh defense industry.⁶⁴⁹

1991–1995 OVERVIEW

Israeli-Kazakh relations developed extremely quickly in the first phase of their relationship. The president and prime minister of each nation made official visits and there were more official visits and meetings between the years of 1992 and 1995 than in any other period covered in this study. Informal agreements were secured by the Israelis regarding Kazakhstan's position vis-à-vis the Palestinians, and the overt nuclear threat posed by Soviet nuclear weapons systems ended when the transfer of Kazakhstan's nuclear weapons to Russia was completed in April 1995. Constructive engagement, which resulted in a number of Israeli commercial enterprises entering the Kazakh market and in Israeli development assistance, sought to help ease the transformation of the Kazakh economy. These overtures were focused at building links with the Kazakh government and society in order to promote an environment that would be conducive to Israeli interests.

For the Kazakhs, warm relations with Israel were of immediate benefit. Their relationship facilitated a rapid influx of business opportunities and financial and material aid. An essential component of the relationship with Israel was the resulting goodwill that it generated in Washington. Friendly ties with Israel was one of the best ways to come to the attention of Western leaders because it sent the message that Kazakhstan was not going to devolve into a hostile state. It is important to note this

⁶⁴⁹ "New look for Kazakh uniforms." *labyrinth: Central Asia Quarterly*, summer (1994): 32.

was not achieved at the expense of Kazakhstan's relationship with the Palestinians or the Muslim world.

In the first phase of their relationship, none of Israel's fears regarding Kazakhstan materialized: Iran did not further its nuclear ambitions with Kazakh technology, Soviet-era WMDs and expertise did not leak out of the CIS, Almaty did not align against Israel, and Islamist radicalism did not take root in Kazakhstan. On the contrary, both before and after Kazakhstan established formal diplomatic relations with Israel on 9 April 1992, Israeli-Kazakh relations grew significantly and precluded the materialization of Israeli fears. Israel established close political, economic, and security relations with the region's most promising economy, and the security of the Jewish community in Kazakhstan was never in jeopardy.

Because Israel's security concerns were satisfactorily allayed in the first years of the relationship, the relative importance of Kazakhstan in Israeli national security policy dropped precipitously. Because Kazakhstan no longer posed a serious and immediate threat to the State of Israel, security concerns from states that were geographically closer to Israel itself resulted in a significant drop in the attention Israel paid to the Israeli-Kazakh relationship.

CHAPTER SIX: ISRAEL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH KAZAKHSTAN, 1996–2001

After the rapid development of the Israeli-Kazakh ties during the first phase of their relationship (1991–1995), Israel's attentions were directed elsewhere. The usefulness to Israel of positive relations with Muslim nations receded in importance as Israel began to emerge from the diplomatic isolation caused by its relationship with the Palestinians. The second phase of the relationship, from 1996 to 1998, was characterized by a decrease in interactions as Israel's attentions were directed closer to home. Little diplomatic activity occurred while trade and commercial levels decreased from their initial peak, and during this period there was no overt security cooperation. The third phase of the relationship covers the years 1999 to 2001, a period marked by a reinvigoration in the relationship and renewed diplomatic and security interactions. While commercial trade was sustained throughout the entire period explored in this chapter, it was during this third phase that the economic relationship between Israel and Kazakhstan truly began to show signs of sustained growth. Phases two and three are discussed in detail below.

This chapter concludes with sections that will analyze Kazakhstan's position on the Arab-Israel conflict and Kazakhstan's position within the United Nations General Assembly on resolutions regarding the Middle East that are considered hostile to Israel. The evolution of Almaty's approach to these two subjects is employed as a metric to gauge the success of Israel's policy of constructive

engagement. This chapter will also continue to demonstrate how Israel achieved its goal of maintaining Kazakh neutrality in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

PHASE II, 1996–1998: LACK OF ENGAGEMENT

After the Oslo breakthroughs (1993), many nations that had previously kept Israel at a distance began to make overtures to Israel. It appeared as though serious steps were being made toward resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and this removed one of the biggest obstacles for countries that had previously avoided contact with Israel. Israel's relationships with non-Arab Muslim countries had been important for Israel's national security because they blunted Israel's conflict with the Palestinians and undercut the wider international community's perception of Israel as an anti-Muslim state. Negotiated coordination with the Palestinians following the September 1993 Declaration of Principles led to an environment that allowed the Jordanians, Moroccans, Tunisians, and Qataris to better their relations with Israel. Israel could relax its urgent efforts in Kazakhstan now that Israel's diplomatic isolation was easing and Israel perceived that the dangers present at Kazakhstan's independence had dissipated.

From 1996 through 1998, the Israeli-Kazakh relationship suffered from a lack of engagement in large part because Israeli attentions were directed elsewhere. New challenges and demands closer to home preoccupied the Israeli government; for example the newly elected Likud government of Benjamin Netanyahu was more skeptical than the Labor party had been in moving toward peace and normalization with the Palestinians and thus slowed Israel's headway in dealing with the Palestinians. In addition, delays in implementing the Oslo Accords, deteriorating relations with the Palestinians, a series of deadly terrorist attacks in Israel, a troubled

Kazakh economy, *Operation Grapes of Wrath* in Lebanon, the threat of Turkish-Syrian hostilities, and the absence of the threats that had been perceived earlier from Kazakhstan contributed to create an atmosphere where Israeli-Kazakh relations stagnated due to lack of urgent attention.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

During the second phase of the relationship, there was only one high profile official visit: a trade promotion trip led by Natan Sharansky. In the preceding phase (1991–1995) and in the following phase (1999–2001) many more high profile official state visits took place. Kazakh efforts to bring the Israelis and Palestinians together did continue, however, as did the meetings of the Kazakh-Israeli Joint Governmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation. Also during this phase the Israel-Kazakhstan Parliamentary Friendship League was created. This indicates that even though official interaction had slowed, the relationship's foundation did not weaken during this period.

Conference on Interaction and Measures of Trust in Asia

On 7 February 1996, representatives of both Israel and the Palestinians attended a two-day conference in Almaty to discuss security and confidence-building measures in Asia at the Conference on Interaction and Measures of Trust in Asia (CIMTA) in Almaty.⁶⁵⁰ This meeting, whose attendees included deputy foreign ministers from 15 nations as well as over a dozen other observers from various nations and international organizations, built upon the successes of a similar October 1995 meeting. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev called CIMTA an attempt “to

⁶⁵⁰ “Conference on security opens in Alma-Ata,” *Itar-TASS world service* (Moscow), in English at 0845 GMT 7 February 1996, in *BBC Monitoring, SWB-FSU*, 7 February 1996.

create an effective mechanism of preventative diplomacy in Asia.”⁶⁵¹ The conference was intended to create a forum for the discussion of three draft documents: a Declaration of Principles of Relations, a document on Rules and Procedures, and a draft of a Structure and Institutions of CIMTA. These documents would eventually form the basis for an international summit in 2002 attended by heads of state, by which time CIMTA would eventually become known as CICA, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia; however, the first CICA Summit would not be held until 2002, which is after the time period examined in this thesis. The idea behind this international assembly of Asian nations was first advanced by President Nazarbayev on the sidelines of the 47th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in October 1992.⁶⁵² According to the US Department of State, CICA serves as a “developing international security forum” which “may culminate in the creation of a transcontinental ‘Conference on Security and Cooperation in Eurasia.’”⁶⁵³ As of mid-2006 the 17 member states of CICA include all of the regional states except Turkmenistan, as well as nine observer states including the United States, Australia, and Japan.⁶⁵⁴ Several international organizations participate in CICA activities, including the United Nations, the

⁶⁵¹ “Conference on security opens,” in *BBC Monitoring, SWB-FSU*, 7 February 1996.

⁶⁵² “Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA),” Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, <http://www.kazakhstanembassy.org.uk/cgi-bin/index/128> (accessed 27 May 2006), and “Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia: History of Success,” <http://www.homestead.com/prosites-kazakhembus/CICA.html> (accessed on 27 May 2006).

⁶⁵³ “Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia,” Fact Sheet, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, US Department of State, 16 July 2003, <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/fs/22786.htm> (accessed 27 May 2006).

⁶⁵⁴ Members as of mid-2006 include Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, India, Israel, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Palestine, Russia, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. Observers include Australia, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Lebanon, Malaysia, Ukraine, the United States, and Vietnam. In 1996, Egypt and Thailand were not yet members of the organization; see “Conference on security opens,” in *BBC Monitoring, SWB-FSU*, 7 February 1996, and “Conference on Interaction,” <http://www.kazakhstanembassy.org.uk/cgi-bin/index/128> (accessed 27 May 2006).

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the League of Arab States.⁶⁵⁵

Through CICA, Kazakh President Nazarbayev seeks “to have enemy states sit down together.”⁶⁵⁶ In doing so, according to one Kazakh political analyst, Nazarbayev is able to feel like a peacemaker, and thus realize his international ambitions to be a major international actor.⁶⁵⁷ Israel and the Palestinians (much like India and Pakistan, two other nations in conflict) have participated in the activities that led to CICA, and the Israelis and Palestinians have subsequently used its auspices as a venue to engage in multi-track diplomacy.⁶⁵⁸ Israel has participated in CICA since its inception and the Israeli Foreign Ministry has stated that it “attaches great importance to this organization.”⁶⁵⁹

To date there have been no reports of CIMTA/CICA being used as venue for unofficial Israeli-Iranian discussions during the period covered in this thesis. According the Kazakh Foreign Ministry, Iran “unconditionally supports”⁶⁶⁰ and participates in the activities of CICA. Iranian participation in CICA further lends support to the notion that Iran and Israel made use of Kazakh good offices to engage in limited discussions; Kazakhstan’s role as an intermediary between Israel and Teheran on such sensitive issues as the detention of Shirazi Jews arrested on charges of espionage, the fate of missing Israeli airman Ron Arad who was shot down over

⁶⁵⁵ “Conference on Interaction,” <http://www.kazakhstanembassy.org.uk/cgi-bin/index/128> (accessed 27 May 2006).

⁶⁵⁶ Nikolay Kuzmin, PhD (Kazakh political analyst), interview with the author, 24 January 2005, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

⁶⁵⁷ Kuzmin, interview.

⁶⁵⁸ Interview with Kazakh Foreign Ministry official, January 2005, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

⁶⁵⁹ “Visit of Deputy FM of Kazakhstan to Israel,” statement of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, 13 May 2001, <http://www.israel.org/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0jy70> (accessed 3 June 2001).

⁶⁶⁰ “Kazakhstan’s Foreign Minister visits Tehran...,” *RFE/RL Newsline* 5, no. 25, 6 February 2001.

Lebanon in 1986,⁶⁶¹ and the circumstances surrounding missing Israeli soldiers,⁶⁶² it would not be surprising if Nazarbayev's CICA has in fact served some role.

It is important to stress that Israel's primary interest in CICA stems not so much from support for Nazarbayev's vision as it does from what CICA represents to Israel. CICA is the first international organization created by a nominally Muslim nation that has included Israel. Moreover, other regional states, such as Iran, have not objected to Israel's inclusion. Thus, for Israeli policy makers, CICA's value arises out of its potential to advance the inclusion, acceptance, and, by default, recognition of Israel among a strong regional bloc.

Israeli diplomats active in international organizations have said that they feel quite comfortable operating in Kazakhstan and appreciate the efforts made by the Kazakhs to include Israel. Kazakhstan, it has been observed, is a country in which Israeli diplomats can and do participate in international forums whose attendees represent nations with whom Israel may not otherwise readily engage.⁶⁶³

The Israel-Kazakhstan Parliamentary Friendship League

Building on the steadily improving state of relations between the two countries, the Knesset created the Israel-Kazakhstan Parliamentary Friendship League in November 1997.⁶⁶⁴ This organization was headed by Member of the Knesset Amnon Cohen, who has also served as the Chairman of the Knesset Economic

⁶⁶¹ "Kazakhstan aids Israel track missing airman," *The Jewish News Weekly of Northern California*, 25 October 2002, and Herb Keinon, "Israel asks Kazakhstan to approach Iran about Ron Arad," *The Jerusalem Post*, 23 October 2002.

⁶⁶² Herb Keinon, "Kazakhstan magnate is planning delegation to visit Iran," *The Jerusalem Post*, 20 May 2003. See also "Iranian Assassins To Be Part Of Israel-Hizballah Prisoner Swap?" *RFE/RL Iran Report* 6, no. 392, 9 September 2003.

⁶⁶³ Discussion with Israeli diplomat, January 2005, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

⁶⁶⁴ "Motives of bilateral relations between Israeli and Kazakhstan," [in Arabic] *Qods News Agency* (Palestine), 23 January 2006, <http://www.qodsna.com> (accessed 30 April 2006).

Committee.⁶⁶⁵ Cohen, who was born in Uzbekistan⁶⁶⁶ and immigrated in 1973, is the extent of Israelis of Central Asian origin influencing Israeli policy towards the former Soviet republics of Central Asia.

The purpose of the League was to improve Israeli friendship and cooperation with Kazakhstan.⁶⁶⁷ In Israel, members in the Israel-Kazakhstan Parliamentary Friendship League have been drawn from across the political spectrum. In Kazakhstan, the *Mazhilis* (Kazakh Parliament) has taken measures to officially recognize the League and participate in its activities, and the government has noted that a counterpart organization was created in the *Mazhilis*.⁶⁶⁸ It is believed that Kazakh Prime Minister Kasymzhomart Tokayev participated in the formation of the Friendship League.⁶⁶⁹

Kazakhstan is not the only country with which the Knesset has established a friendship league. There exist similar leagues for many other nations including America, Russia, China, Azerbaijan, South Korea, Germany, and Italy; however, the Israel-Kazakhstan Parliamentary Friendship League was the first to be established with a Central Asian state, and as such it is indicative of the close ties that existed between Israel and Kazakhstan.

ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The three years from 1996 through 1998 was a period of modest yet sustained Israeli commercial activity in Kazakhstan (see table 6.1). Annual Israeli exports to and imports from Kazakhstan show that during these three years the total level of

⁶⁶⁵ "About the Kazakhstan-Israeli relations," Statement of the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the State of Israel, n.d., <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>. See also "Motives of bilateral relations," <http://www.qodsna.com> (accessed 30 April 2006).

⁶⁶⁶ *Israel Yearbook & Almanac 2000*, Volume 54 (Jerusalem, 2000), p. 123.

⁶⁶⁷ "Motives of bilateral relations," <http://www.qodsna.com> (accessed 30 April 2006).

⁶⁶⁸ "About Kazakhstan-Israeli relations," <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>.

⁶⁶⁹ Based upon discussions in spring 2006 with a former American diplomat based in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

trade averaged about \$11.56 million per year, down from 1993's record \$35.5 million and the \$15.5 million registered in 1994. In 1996 Israel exported \$10.9 million worth of goods to Kazakhstan,⁶⁷⁰ while the figures for 1997 and 1998 were \$9.7 million⁶⁷¹ and \$12.3 million,⁶⁷² respectively.

Imports from Kazakhstan, however, were much more modest. Total imports were \$0.2 million⁶⁷³ in 1996, which slipped to \$0.1 million⁶⁷⁴ in 1997, and then rose to \$1.5 million⁶⁷⁵ in 1998. This second phase of the Israeli-Kazakh relationship concludes with the highest import figures yet recorded.

Table 6.1 Israeli-Kazakh Trade, 1996–1998
(in Millions of Dollars)

	1996	1997	1998
Exports	\$10.9	\$9.7	\$12.3
Imports	\$0.2	\$0.1	\$1.5

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel).

Sharansky's Trade Promotion Visit

Natan Sharansky, the Israeli government's point man on Central Asia and the Minister of Industry and Trade, led a delegation to Kazakhstan beginning 28 June 1998. Sharansky's group met with the prime minister and others, and discussed increasing the trade turnover between Israel and Almaty.⁶⁷⁶ The delegation was composed of Israeli officials and business representatives interested in discussing deals related to "telecommunications, chemical fertilizers, machine tools, medical

⁶⁷⁰ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 48*, Central Bureau of Statistics (Jerusalem, 1997), chart 8.5, p. 231.

⁶⁷¹ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 49*, Central Bureau of Statistics (Jerusalem, 1998), chart 8.5, p. 8-11.

⁶⁷² *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 50*, Central Bureau of Statistics (Jerusalem, 1999), chart 8.5, p. 8-11.

⁶⁷³ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 48*, chart 8.5, p. 230.

⁶⁷⁴ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 49*, chart 8.5, p. 8-10.

⁶⁷⁵ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 50*, chart 8.5, p. 8-10.

⁶⁷⁶ See "Motives of bilateral relations," <http://www.qodsna.com> (accessed 30 April 2006), and "Israeli delegation to visit Uzbekistan," n.p., 27 June 1998, http://uzland.info/06_27_98.htm (accessed 8 April 2006).

equipment, electrical devices, agricultural produce, and plastic goods.”⁶⁷⁷ In 1998, annual trade turnover between Israel and Kazakhstan was valued at \$10 million; looking forward, Israel was most interested in strategic investment in Kazakhstan’s natural resources (especially hydrocarbons and non-ferrous metals), in which Israel had been invited to invest.⁶⁷⁸ This visit signified the desire of the Israeli government to boost trade turnover, despite the relatively low figures, and to focus on laying the groundwork for future commercial ties. Sharansky’s involvement was a further indication of Israel’s intentions due to his unique role in Israeli-Central Asian policy.⁶⁷⁹

During the period from 1996 through 1998, two further developments occurred regarding Israeli-Kazakh commercial relations. First was the third meeting of the Kazakh-Israeli Joint Governmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation which coincided with the visit of Sharansky’s delegation in June 1998. This meeting focused on methods to raise trade volumes. The second event was the implementation of a free trade agreement between Israel and Kazakhstan. While Israel maintains a number of free trade agreements with numerous countries of the World Trade Organization, Israel’s agreement with Kazakhstan was one of just a few that Israel has with non-WTO member-states. Both of these developments demonstrate that despite Israel’s lack of political engagement in the relationship during this phase, commercial relations continued to build.

⁶⁷⁷ “Israeli delegation to visit,” http://uzland.info/06_27_98.htm (accessed 8 April 2006).

⁶⁷⁸ “Israeli delegation to visit,” http://uzland.info/06_27_98.htm (accessed 8 April 2006).

⁶⁷⁹ Jonathan Hadar (desk officer responsible for the Central Asian republics at the Ministry of Industry and Trade), telephone interview with the author, 30 June 1999, Jerusalem.

Development Assistance

Between 1996 and 1998, two notable development programs took place that were not commercial enterprises. The first concerned water conservation; the second focused on medical care. In mid-1997, the ministers responsible for Water Affairs from the five republics—under the aegis of the Kazakh-based, regional organization National Committee for Coordinating Water Resources—paid a visit to Israel to discuss technological assistance in water purification and agricultural water recycling. Discussions focused on programs to share and manage scarce regional water resources and their effects on industry and agriculture.⁶⁸⁰

Israel was also active in providing medical aid and assistance. During the winter of 1997, MASHAV sent Russian-speaking physicians to Kazakhstan⁶⁸¹ to teach local doctors a safer and simpler method to perform Caesarian deliveries.⁶⁸² A similar project involved plastic surgery for Kazakh children suffering from facial deformities such as cleft palates.⁶⁸³ In this program, children were brought to Israel for corrective procedures, and Israeli doctors traveled to Kazakhstan to train local physicians in the procedures as well.⁶⁸⁴ An important reason for the numerous medical programs to Kazakhstan was the large number of Jewish Russia-speaking medical workers in Israel that had made Aliyah from the Soviet Union and its successor states.⁶⁸⁵ It was a priority for Israel to engage in these assistance programs, and it had a vast talent pool with connections to the region.

⁶⁸⁰ "Central Asian Ministers for Water Affairs Come to Israel," *MASHAV News, Shalom Magazine*, no. 2 (1997), p. 4.

⁶⁸¹ Kyrgyzstan and Georgia were also visited.

⁶⁸² Ruth Seligman. "The Misgav Ladach Method – Maximum Effect, Minimum Damage," *Shalom Magazine*, no. 2 (1997), p. 1.

⁶⁸³ Ziva Shapira, "Small Contributions to Big Countries: Health Workers at Kaplan Hospital," *Shalom Magazine*, no. 2 (1997), p. 3.

⁶⁸⁴ Shapira, "Small Contributions to Big Countries," p. 4.

⁶⁸⁵ Shapira, "Small Contributions to Big Countries," p. 1.

Major Commercial Investment, 1996–1998

As table 6.2 demonstrates, Israeli investment in Kazakhstan focused largely on two key sectors in the second phase of the relationship. In the telecom sector, Israeli firms continued to build on the successes gained in the Kazakh market. During this period there was an increase in activity in the energy sector, with Israeli firms active in the construction and management of energy and power infrastructures. A brief discussion of some of the more notable projects during this period follows.

Table 6.2 Major Israeli Projects, 1996–1998

Year	Project	Sector	Business(es) Involved	Contract size (where known)
1996	Refinery construction project	Energy	Metek Metal Technology Company	NA
1996	Drip irrigation project	Agricultural	MASHAV	\$0.45m
1996–97	Purchase of 4 power plants & fee for 20-year operating concession	Energy	Suntree Power	\$4.5m, +\$20.7m
1997	Shareholder in Tenge upstream JV	Energy	NIR-Tenge	NA
1998	Telephony expansion project	Telecom	Gilat	\$6.2m
1998	Telephony expansion project	Telecom	ECI Telecom	NA
1998	Telephony expansion project	Telecom	SAP	NA
1998	Telephony expansion project	Telecom	Tadiran Telecom	\$3m

Sources: Fedorchenko; *Israel Business Today*; Aras (2002); *BBC Monitoring*; *Interfax*; author's research.

Israel's Metek Metal Technology Company—also active in Uzbekistan—participated in a 1996 refinery construction project in Kazakhstan. Metek Metal initiated and managed the project and also ensured that the refinery production volume could expand. Financing was facilitated by loans from commercial banks in Israel, Canada, and the Czech Republic “against guarantees provided by the government of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Israel.”⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁶ Andrey Vasilyevich Fedorchenko, “Kazakhstan-Israel: Ways of Economic Rapprochement,” <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001, site discontinued).

The following year, Suntree Power and its American partner AES “bought four combined heat and power plants in eastern Kazakhstan and agreed to manage for 20 years two hydroelectric plants.”⁶⁸⁷ As a result, AES and Suntree Power controlled “a large part of the power generating capacity of eastern Kazakhstan and have plans in the future to potentially transmit electricity across the border to China.”⁶⁸⁸ Another Israeli firm, NIR-Tenge, was also active in the energy sector as one of four foreign shareholders in the Tenge upstream joint venture in the western Mangistau oblast.⁶⁸⁹

From 1996 through the end of 1998, Israeli firms continued to maintain a presence in the Kazakh telecom market, winning telephony upgrade and expansion contracts in 1998. Israel was the logical choice for providing telecom work. Israel has the most highly developed telecom system in the Middle East, and while Israel’s system is not the largest in the region, it is entirely digital and is far superior to any other system in the region.⁶⁹⁰ Moreover, since 1995 international telephone calls from Kazakhstan were routed through Israel because this was faster, cheaper, and more efficient.⁶⁹¹ Israel’s competitive advantage in the telecom sector also resulted in their involvement in projects to provide technology transfers throughout the telecom sector.⁶⁹² Because Kazakh telecom infrastructure was in shambles and international calling tedious, the choice to employ the region’s best provider of telecom technology and services is understandable.

As with other Israeli commercial ventures in Kazakhstan, the Israeli government provided extensive insurance for these deals and approved the

⁶⁸⁷ “Kazakhstan: Social and Political Backdrop,” draft version of a confidential petroleum industry report, n.p., n.d., p. 19. Document in the collection of the author.

⁶⁸⁸ “Kazakhstan: Social and Political Backdrop,” p. 19.

⁶⁸⁹ “Kazakhstan: Golden Eagle Eyes Joint Venture Swoop,” *Nefte Compass*, 16 March 2000.

⁶⁹⁰ Data drawn from *The World Factbook*, Field Listing – Telephone System, US Central Intelligence Agency, <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/fields/2124.html> (accessed 19 June 2006).

⁶⁹¹ See previous discussion of satellite connection in chapter five.

⁶⁹² Bülent Aras, “Post-Cold War Realities: Israel’s Strategy in Azerbaijan and Central Asia,” *Middle East Policy* 5, no. 4 (January 1998): p. 77.

investments. Israeli financial institutions such as Bank Leumi provided credit financing to Kazakhtelecom. Israeli telecommunications upgrades thus carry the imprint of government approval, and in essence are hard to distinguish from official Israeli governmental projects.

In July 1998 the Israeli telecommunications firm Gilat reached an agreement with Kazakh officials to expand satellite telecommunications coverage throughout the country. Under the terms of the 18-month contract with Kazakhtelecom, Gilat provided satellite communications coverage to over 250 cities in Kazakhstan, valued in excess of \$6,200,000.⁶⁹³ Project financing was guaranteed by the Israeli government and Israel's Bank Leumi provided a loan to facilitate the deal.⁶⁹⁴ While the deal included standard provisions that Gilat would provide the "equipment, technology, and expertise"⁶⁹⁵ required for the completion of the contract, it also provided for future components to be manufactured in Kazakhstan. The Gilat telephony upgrade deal not only represented a significant and much needed upgrade to Kazakhstan's infrastructure, but it also provided for an Israeli technology transfer to jumpstart Kazakh self-sufficiency in a commercial enterprise. A Russian report valued the Gilat contract in excess of tens of millions of dollars, a figure which included Kazakh manufacture of components under Gilat's imprimatur.⁶⁹⁶

Several other Israeli firms entered the Kazakh telecom market during this period, including ECI Telecom, Motorola Israel, SAP, and Tadiran Telecom.⁶⁹⁷ Tadiran Telecom is a subsidiary of Africa Israel Investments Ltd owned by Lev

⁶⁹³ "Motives of bilateral relations," <http://www.qodsna.com> (accessed 30 April 2006); "Israeli company to develop Kazakh communications network," *Interfax news agency* (Moscow), in English 1543 GMT 17 July 1998, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, Central Asia-Political, 17 July 1998.

⁶⁹⁴ "Israeli company develop Kazakh," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports* (17 July 1998).

⁶⁹⁵ "Israeli company develop Kazakh," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports* (17 July 1998).

⁶⁹⁶ Fedorchenko, "Kazakhstan-Israel," <http://www.transcaspian.ru/cgi-bin/web.exe/eng/7514.html> (accessed 22 June 2001, site discontinued).

⁶⁹⁷ "About Kazakhstan-Israeli relations," <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>.

Leviev, Kazakhstan's honorary consul in Israel; Tadiran is also related to an Israeli military equipment firm. The number of Israeli firms involved in the Kazakh telecom sector is indicative of the rapid and thorough response Israel made to Kazakhstan's modernization efforts.

1996–1998 OVERVIEW

The second phase of the Israeli-Kazakh relationship witnessed a significant drop-off in the level of interaction between the two states. With Israel's attention directed elsewhere, less urgency was devoted to ties with Kazakhstan. It is important to bear in mind that even though the relationship during this period may not have been as vibrant as it had during the previous period, the underlying bonds between Israel and Kazakhstan remained firm.

Relations between Israel and Almaty were still predicated on the strong foundation upon which they had been based: Israeli investment and access to the West still drove Kazakhstan, while a desire to promote Israeli influence and block Iran kept Israel interested in Kazakhstan.⁶⁹⁸ During the years 1996 to 1998, progress on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict slowed noticeably, the Oslo Accords appeared to be all but dead, Israel still occupied southern Lebanon, and dialogues with the Syrians showed no movement. As a result, Israel's international standing was compromised; all the reasons that had led Israel to be distracted from its relationship with Kazakhstan now became important reasons for Israel to re-engage with Almaty.

⁶⁹⁸ David Menashri, PhD (Head of Middle Eastern and African History, Tel Aviv University), interview with the author, 7 July 1999, Tel Aviv, Israel.

PHASE III, 1999–2001: RE-ENGAGEMENT

After stalling from 1996–1998, the Israeli-Kazakh relationship picked up again during the final period under examination here. In this third phase of the relationship, annual trade turnover rose and official visits again characterized the friendship between the two countries. The election of Ehud Barak to succeed Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister in May 1999 marked the return to power of the Labor party and its desire to advance the peace process as well as improve Israel's security. The economic situation also began to improve and benefited from a Kazakh investment conference held in Israel during President Nazarbayev's return visit in April 2000. In March 2001, Israeli politicians, academics, MKs, and businesspeople formed the Friends of Kazakhstan club, with former Knesset Speaker Dan Tikhon as the first president.⁶⁹⁹

Israel realized that dangers far from home still existed and constructive engagement with Kazakhstan was an essential tool in countering these threats (for example threats of Iranian origin). The lack of progress with the Palestinians and Israel's other Arab neighbors in the preceding several years made Israel cognizant of the utility of warm ties with non-Arab Muslim nations. This final period in the relationship saw Israel nurture its relationship with Kazakhstan through diplomacy, commercial engagement, and security cooperation.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Renewed diplomatic engagement between Israel and Kazakhstan was buoyed in this period by Kazakhstan's shifting position with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While Almaty had always been strictly neutral and even-handed, the Kazakh

⁶⁹⁹ "About Kazakhstan-Israeli relations," <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>.

position in the UN General Assembly on issues related to Israel became subtly more moderate. In addition, PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat returned to visit Kazakhstan and President Nazarbayev traveled to both Israel and Ramallah. This period also saw Almaty's attempts to moderate between Israel and Teheran.

A number of diplomatic visits occurred during this period, as detailed in table 6.3. During this further consolidation of the relationship, several additional agreements were reached, as enumerated in table 6.4. An examination of the most important visits and an analysis of how they contributed to the Israeli-Kazakh relationship is given below.

Table 6.3 Major Visits, 1999–2001

Date	Visitor	Purpose	Location
<i>Apr '99</i>	<i>PLO Chairman Arafat</i>	<i>Working visit</i>	<i>Kazakhstan</i>
mid-1999	Rabbi Menahem Froman	Discussion with Iranian delegation on Shirazi Jews charged with espionage	Kazakhstan
Sep '99	Vice PM & FM Tokayev	Official visit	Israel
Apr '00	Investment in Kazakhstan conference	Trade exhibition	Israel
Apr '00	President Nazarbayev	Second official state visit	Israel
<i>Apr '00</i>	<i>President Nazarbayev</i>	<i>Working visit</i>	<i>Ramallah</i>
May '01	Deputy FM Abuseitov	Working visit	Israel
<i>May '01</i>	<i>Deputy FM Abuseitov</i>	<i>Working visit</i>	<i>Ramallah</i>
Jul '01	Infrastructure Minister Avigdor Liberman	Trade promotion tour	Kazakhstan

Sources: Itar-TASS; Jerusalem Post; Qods News Agency; Eurasianet.org; author's research.

Table 6.4 Major Agreements, 2000

Date	Agreement	Focus	Where Signed
Apr '00	Customs agreement	Political/Economic	Israel
Apr '00	Declaration of the further development of mutual understanding & cooperation between the Republic of Kazakhstan & the State of Israel	Political	Israel
Apr '00	Agreement to create Joint Committee for the Enhancement of Cooperation	Economic	Israel
Apr '00	Agreements on Business and Investment cooperation	Economic	Israel

Sources: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Division of Foreign Trade and International Relations; author's research.

ARAFAT'S 1999 VISIT TO ALMATY

In April 1999, PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat returned to Almaty for a working visit.⁷⁰⁰ During this visit Arafat and Nazarbayev discussed the state of relations between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority as well as the ongoing NATO bombing of Serbian forces in the Kosovo war. Arafat informed Nazarbayev of his intention to declare Palestinian independence on 5 May 1999; however, that event never came to pass.

Nazarbayev took advantage of this opportunity to reiterate his stance on the peace process by saying that "Kazakhstan acknowledged the rights of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples and the problem should be solved gradually by negotiation."⁷⁰¹ While with Arafat, Nazarbayev delivered one of his most detailed remarks on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in which he urged the parties to return to negotiations and come to a settlement without resorting to violence. Nazarbayev also voiced his concern for the first time over the fate of Jerusalem as the home to the Haram al-Sharif. He told a press conference:

⁷⁰⁰ Bakhyt Zhumaliyeva, "Kazakhstan for an end to NATO bombing," *Itar-TASS Weekly News*, 16 April 1999.

⁷⁰¹ "Kazakh President meets Palestinian leader," *BBC World Service*, 16 April 1999.

Kazakhstan is for peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict. It is necessary to get down to the negotiating table and settle the conflict without infringing [on] each other's interests so that the solution of the matter should not cause a new wave of violence and confrontation. We are also concerned over the destiny of Jerusalem, where the third Muslim shrine, al-Quds Mosque, is situated.⁷⁰²

The Kazakh president also expressed his opinion that both sides were moving too slowly in seeking to address final status issues in the peace talks. Nazarbayev drew attention to the fact that the United Nations had set a five-year deadline in 1994 for the preparation of Palestinian independence and that both the Israelis and Palestinians had signed an agreement in May 1998 to meet their obligations. Arafat and Nazarbayev would next meet one year later on the Kazakh president's visit to Israel and Ramallah.

Nazarbayev's comments while Arafat was in Almaty are noteworthy for three reasons. First, they mark a different Kazakh approach in dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Previously, Nazarbayev and other Kazakh officials had simply expressed their support for a peaceful, negotiated settlement, with no comments on the pace of the discussions. However, at this meeting Nazarbayev took the opportunity to express his opinion that the negotiations were not moving quickly enough. In past remarks, Nazarbayev had avoided commenting on such procedural matters, even though he himself had taken measures to facilitate greater dialogue between the parties. Second, Nazarbayev's comments stressed the importance of the United Nations and the international community in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Kazakhstan had always emphasized the importance of the United Nations and the Kazakh voting record on Middle East issues in the General Assembly through spring

⁷⁰² Zhumaliyeva, "Kazakhstan for end bombing."

1999 reflects that position. Third, in his remarks Nazarbayev expressed concern over the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. While such concern does not reveal any bias or preference with respect to the fate of holy sites in Jerusalem, this was the first time Nazarbayev had made any statements which revealed any attachments of concerns about to the specifics of final status issues at stake. Never before had Nazarbayev referred to Muslim holy places in Jerusalem. Because of this, his remarks are a rare departure from his usual disengaged yet supportive comments.

Kazakhstan's Mediation Role with Iran

One of the key points to note about Kazakhstan's relationship with Israel is that it did not prevent the emergence of friendly ties with Iran. On the contrary, Kazakhstan maintained good ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran, despite the closeness that existed between Almaty and Israel. Much like the relationship with Israel, Kazakhstan managed to have good political and economic ties despite the differences that existed between the national interests of both states.

Kazakhstan professed the opinion that Iranian-backed Islamic fundamentalism did not have a place in Central Asia; the Kazakh constitution defined Kazakhstan as a secular state.⁷⁰³ As discussed previously in chapter three, Iran realized rather early in its relationship with the Central Asian republics that the region was not fertile ground for the export of the Islamic revolution. As a result Teheran focused instead on re-establishing cultural links throughout Central Asia. Teheran also attempted to build economic ties via agreements such as the short-lived 1996 oil swap whereby Kazakh

⁷⁰³ See International Religious Freedom Report, "Kazakhstan," prepared by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2001/5574.htm> (accessed 21 June 2006).

crude was delivered to northern Iran in exchange for a corresponding portion of Iranian oil sold on the international market.⁷⁰⁴

As a result of the good relations enjoyed by Kazakhstan with both Israel and Iran, it is not surprising that Almaty would seek to mediate between the two states. This was most dramatically illustrated by the role the Kazakh government played in the case of 13 Iranian Jews who had been arrested in the southern city of Shiraz on 7 June 1999, charged with spying for Israel and the United States.⁷⁰⁵ According to *The Jerusalem Post* and *Foreign Report*, very high-level covert discussions were held in Almaty among Israeli Rabbi Menahem Froman, an Iranian delegation, and President Nazarbayev.⁷⁰⁶ The reports claimed that Rabbi Froman was “proposed by the Kazakh ambassador to Israel as a possible conduit between Israel and Iran” and added that “an eventual unofficial meeting [in Iran] with Iranian President Mohammed Khatami, as two men of religion, is not out of the question.”⁷⁰⁷

Although Rabbi Froman had previously obtained permission to travel to Iran,⁷⁰⁸ it is not known that his meeting with Khatami ever took place. It was reported in August 2000 in both *Ad-Diplomasi* and *The Jerusalem Post* that Israeli officials had privately admitted to Iranian representatives in Cairo that “10 of the Iranian Jews convicted of espionage were in fact spying for Israel.”⁷⁰⁹

This episode is one of the strongest indications of cooperation between Kazakhstan and Israel in matters of national security. In facilitating the meeting between Iranian and Israeli representatives on such a sensitive issue, Kazakhstan

⁷⁰⁴ Majid Jafar, “Kazakhstan: oil, politics, and the new ‘Great Game’,” in *The Caspian: Politics, energy, and security*, ed. Shirin Akiner (London, 2004), p. 204.

⁷⁰⁵ “Thirteen arrested on charges of spying for Israel, USA,” in *British Broadcasting Corporation, Summary of World Broadcasts* (hereafter *BBC SWB*) ME/3556 MED/1[1] (9 June 1999).

⁷⁰⁶ Douglas Davis and Margot Dudkevitch, “Report: Froman held talks on arrested Iranian Jews,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 8 July 1999.

⁷⁰⁷ Davis and Dudkevitch, “Report: Froman held talks.”

⁷⁰⁸ Shawn L. Twing, “Israeli Rabbi Given Iran Travel OK,” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, May/June 1998.

⁷⁰⁹ *Jane’s Intelligence Watch Report–Daily Update* 7, no. 151, 10 August 2000.

mobilized a significant portion of its government, from the president to its diplomatic missions abroad. The notion that Kazakhstan was trusted by both nations is further evidenced by the fact that the initial meeting was held in the Kazakh capital.

While this episode illustrates the closeness between Kazakhstan and Israel, it also illustrates the trust between Kazakhstan and Iranian. The arrest of Jewish Iranians on charges of spying for Israel was a development that Iranian officials wanted to resolve as quickly and quietly as possible due to the potential damage it could have caused to Iran's already rocky relations with the West.⁷¹⁰ Because of Kazakhstan's close ties with Israel, Almaty proved to be a good location for Teheran's unofficial dialogue. Moreover, the role that Nazarbayev and Almaty played realized Nazarbayev's desire to be an international mediator, and this presumably advanced Kazakhstan's profile in the West.

Nazarbayev's Second Official Visit to Israel

The April 1999 meeting with Arafat in Almaty was quickly followed by President Nazarbayev's second official visit to Israel one year later, from 3–5 April 2000.⁷¹¹ While in Israel, Nazarbayev participated in an international conference on investment in Kazakhstan⁷¹² and discussed a number of issues related to Israeli-Kazakh relations, including ways in which to increase trade and expand bilateral cooperation. During his visit, Nazarbayev signed a customs agreement to facilitate increased trade and transit,⁷¹³ and he signed accords to promote business and investments between Israel and Almaty.⁷¹⁴ The "Declaration of the further

⁷¹⁰ "Secret Mission to Kazakhstan," *Foreign Report*, no. 2551, 8 July 1999.

⁷¹¹ "About Kazakhstan-Israeli relations," <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>.

⁷¹² "Economic News Digest," *Itar-TASS Weekly News*, 3 April 2000.

⁷¹³ Kazakhstan country page, *NCSJ: Advocates on behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia*, <http://www.ncsj.org/kazakhstan>.

⁷¹⁴ "About Kazakhstan-Israeli relations," <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>.

development of mutual understanding and cooperation between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the State of Israel”⁷¹⁵ was also signed by Nazarbayev while he was in Israel. Furthermore, the two nations agreed to create a joint committee to further promote ties between Israel and Kazakhstan.⁷¹⁶ Nazarbayev and his delegation also held meetings with members of the Knesset,⁷¹⁷ as well as with leaders of Israel’s business and financial communities to discuss greater investment in Kazakhstan.⁷¹⁸

During the visit, the Israeli government publicly thanked and expressed its gratitude to Kazakhstan and the Kazakh people for all that had been done to rescue “tens of thousands of Jewish families”⁷¹⁹ during the Second World War. In recognition of Nazarbayev’s efforts to strengthen Israeli-Kazakh relations, Israeli President Ezer Weizman and Chief Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi-Doron presented Nazarbayev with an award “for Special Merits before the Jewish People.”⁷²⁰ Also during this visit, 3,000 trees were planted in Nazarbayev’s honor in the vicinity of Jerusalem in recognition of all that the Kazakh president had done to further relations between Israel and Almaty.⁷²¹ All this was an extremely rare honor, especially for a visiting Muslim head of state.

On the issue of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict, Kazakhstan’s efforts to ‘establish stability’ in the Middle East were given “special appreciation” by President Weizman and Prime Minister Barak in their meetings with Nazarbayev. Kazakh Television’s first channel reported that according to Nazarbayev, the participation of

⁷¹⁵ “About Kazakhstan-Israeli relations,” <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>.

⁷¹⁶ Kazakhstan country page, <http://www.ncsj.org/kazakhstan>.

⁷¹⁷ Oral Karpishev, “Nazarbayev to attend forum on investments in Kazakhstan,” *Itar-TASS Weekly News*, 3 April 2000.

⁷¹⁸ Oral Karpishev, “Kazakh president to leave for Israel for official visit,” *Itar-TASS Weekly News*, 3 April 2000.

⁷¹⁹ “About Kazakhstan-Israeli relations,” <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>.

⁷²⁰ “About Kazakhstan-Israeli relations,” <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>. See also “Kazakh president visits Israel, Palestine, signs cooperation,” *Kazakh Television first channel* (Astana), in Kazakh, 6 April 2000, in *BBC Monitoring International Reports* (6 April 2000).

⁷²¹ For more details, see either the Kazakhstan country page, <http://www.ncsj.org/kazakhstan>, or “About Kazakhstan-Israeli relations,” <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>.

the United Nations in working to achieve a peaceful settlement to the conflict is very important to Kazakh foreign policy.⁷²²

Kazakhstan and the Palestinian Authority

While in the region, Nazarbayev traveled to Ramallah in the West Bank to meet with Chairman Arafat at the Mukata'a, the Palestinian Authority's administrative headquarters. At a news conference following his meeting with Arafat, Nazarbayev stated that "there are no difficulties in relations between Kazakhstan and Palestine. There are no unresolved political and economic issues." Nazarbayev told reporters that he wanted to strengthen relations with Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority; he blamed the lack of greater Kazakh-Palestinian relations on the "internal situation." Nazarbayev was referring to the slow progress on negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians, an opinion he had voiced when he had met with Arafat a year earlier in Almaty.⁷²³

As a means of demonstrating the current extent of the relationship, Nazarbayev noted the 150 Palestinian students in attendance at universities in Kazakhstan and commented that in addition to 50 Kazakh students at "Palestine's university," a further 100 young Kazakhs were on exchange programs in the Palestinian Territories. He also reminded the journalists in attendance that Kazakhstan and the Palestinian Authority have exchanged ambassadors and that both were participating in a bilateral economic commission to boost trade.⁷²⁴

⁷²² "Kazakh president visits Israel," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports* (6 April 2000).

⁷²³ "Kazakh president visits Israel," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports* (6 April 2000).

⁷²⁴ Remarks of President Nazarbayev in "Kazakh president visits Israel," in *BBC Monitoring International Reports* (6 April 2000).

The Beginnings of a Subtle Policy Shift

It is interesting to note that when Nazarbayev met with Arafat (both in Almaty in 1999 and Ramallah in 2000), he expressed the view that negotiations must occur at a faster pace whereas when with Israeli representatives, the Kazakh president did not make reference to the frequency or progress of the talks—he only called for further talks. This marks the beginning of a small but noteworthy development in the last phase of the Israeli-Kazakh relationship in that Nazarbayev's remarks to the Palestinians differ from those made to the Israelis. In the two earlier phases of the Israeli-Kazakh relationship, Nazarbayev did not comment on the pace of negotiations at all; he only stressed that they continue.

It appears that Nazarbayev's gentle prodding of Arafat was part of a larger pattern evident within the international community at the time, which was urging the Palestinian leadership to take bold steps towards reaching a final peace with the Israelis. This swell in international encouragement was at its peak during the July 2000 Camp David summit in which Arafat and Barak failed to reach a final status settlement.⁷²⁵ In maintaining a gentle pressure on the Palestinian leadership to work towards peace, Nazarbayev subtly shifted his approach on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict away from being strictly non-partisan while still firmly advancing the position that an end to the dispute could be achieved through international mediation. In this sense, Nazarbayev's statements to the Palestinians can be interpreted as having mild pro-Israeli undercurrents. These understated nuances in the Kazakh position become clearer when they are examined in conjunction with the details of Kazakhstan's voting pattern shift in the UN General Assembly on issues related to

⁷²⁵ For more on the roles of American, Israeli, Saudi, and Egyptian leaders in working to convince Arafat to accept the Camp David terms, see Elsa Walsh, "The Prince," *The New Yorker*, 24 March 2003, pp. 48-63.

Israel and the Middle East that took place during this phase; this analysis follows later in this chapter.

It is essential to note, however, that this delicate modification did not harm Kazakhstan's relations with the Muslim world. It was not so apparent as to cause a disruption in the relationship between Almaty and Teheran, which was based more upon political and economic realism rather than philosophical or perceptual affinity. Nor was the Kazakh shift as bold as the positions adopted by other Arab and Muslim states such as Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey. Nonetheless, Nazarbayev's subtle reorientation—a minor development, but nonetheless evident—is the first recognizable shift in what had been a consistent policy since their independence.

Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister to Israel

In May 2001 Kairat Abuseitov, the deputy foreign minister of Kazakhstan, paid a working visit to Israel to invite Shimon Peres—then the deputy prime minister and foreign minister—to attend a conference in Almaty entitled “The Twenty-First Century: Towards a World Free of Nuclear Weapons.”⁷²⁶ Peres, in addition to other world leaders such as former Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, agreed to speak at the conference.⁷²⁷ The conference was suggested by President Nazarbayev and is indicative of how he sought to act as an international mediator on the issue of nuclear weapons. Sources in the Kazakh Foreign Ministry stated that the conference was intended to boost regional stability and trust,⁷²⁸ like Nazarbayev's other international initiatives. Since Kazakhstan renounced nuclear weapons in February

⁷²⁶ “Visit of Deputy FM of Kazakhstan to Israel,” statement of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, 13 May 2001, <http://www.israel.org/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0jy70> (accessed 3 June 2001).

⁷²⁷ “Kazakh leader to attend anti-nuclear conference in southern capital,” *Khabar TV* (Almaty), in Russian 27 August 2001, in *BBC Monitoring*, n.d.

⁷²⁸ Oral Karpishev, “Kazakhstan to host forum on confidence-building in Asia,” *Itar-TASS Weekly News*, 14 February 2001.

1994, Nazarbayev had spoken out against them and urged all the nations active in CICA to follow his lead.

While in Israel, Abuseitov also discussed Israel's continued participation in CIMTA/CICA as well as Israeli-Kazakh bilateral relations and "the situation in the Middle East"⁷²⁹ before heading to the Palestinian Authority. Nazarbayev's instruction to discuss the fall 2001 CICA meeting with Palestinian officials.⁷³⁰ The invitation and Abuseitov's discussions on the state of Israeli-Arab relations is further evidence of Nazarbayev acting in the role of an international peacemaker that some observers have noted he aspires.⁷³¹

ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

From 1999 to 2001 the commercial and economic aspects of the Israeli-Kazakh relationship grew in both scope and substance. The expansion in trade was driven by a political will to increase business and investment opportunities as well as by the desire of Israeli investors to profit from a very large and relatively untapped market.

Between 1999 and 2001, Israeli exports to Kazakhstan climbed each year, from \$11.3 million⁷³² in 1999, to \$16.3 million⁷³³ in 2000, to \$20.9 million in 2001⁷³⁴ (see table 6.5). Israeli imports, on the other hand, remained relatively constant, as they have throughout the overall period examined in this thesis. Down from the

⁷²⁹ "Visit of Deputy FM," <http://www.israel.org/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0jy70> (accessed 3 June 2001).

⁷³⁰ Karpishev, "Kazakhstan to host forum."

⁷³¹ Kuzmin, interview.

⁷³² *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 51*, Central Bureau of Statistics (Jerusalem, 2000), chart 8.5, p. 8-11.

⁷³³ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 52*, Central Bureau of Statistics (Jerusalem, 2001), chart 16.5, p. 16-11.

⁷³⁴ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 53*, Central Bureau of Statistics (Jerusalem, 2002), chart 16.5, p. 16-11.

record \$1.5 million registered in 1998, Israel imported \$0.2 million⁷³⁵ worth of goods from Kazakhstan in 1999, followed by a rise to \$0.7 million⁷³⁶ in 2000, and a return to near the 10-year average (\$0.36 million) with \$0.2 million⁷³⁷ in 2001.

Table 6.5 Israeli-Kazakh trade, 1999-2001
(in Millions of Dollars)

	1999	2000	2001
Exports	\$11.3	\$16.3	\$20.9
Imports	\$0.2	\$0.7	\$0.2

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel).

The upward trend in Israeli exports to Kazakhstan, while not reaching as high as the level set in 1993 (\$35.5 million), demonstrates the renewed and reinvigorated commercial relationship between Israel and Kazakhstan in this final phase from 1999 to 2001. In this period, Israeli-Kazakh economic relations centered on improving the commercial relationship by expanding the investment opportunities available to Israeli businesses. Two events during this period contributed to bolster trade turnover: first, the Investment in Kazakhstan conference held in Israel during President Nazarbayev's April 2000 visit and, second, the trade promotion visit to Kazakhstan led by Minister of Infrastructure Avigdor Liberman. Moreover, by this time the Kazakh economy had begun to recover from the turmoil of the mid-1990s. Greater freedom for foreign investment, the elimination of governmental bloat, more stability in the currency, increased prices and availability of Kazakh goods in the international marketplace, and improvements in the hydrocarbon sector all contributed to the revival of the Kazakh economy.

⁷³⁵ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 51*, chart 8.5, p. 8-10.

⁷³⁶ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 52*, chart 16.5, p. 16-10.

⁷³⁷ *Statistical Abstract of Israel, Number 53*, chart 16.5, p. 16-10.

Investment in Kazakhstan Conference

While on his second state visit to Israel, President Nazarbayev attended and presided over the Investment in Kazakhstan conference which was held in early April 2000. This conference was a made a success by the active “participation of a large number of Israeli businessmen, bankers, and also business representatives from Kazakhstan and [the] delegation of the [business representatives from the] southern Kazakhstan region”⁷³⁸ that accompanied Nazarbayev on his trip to Israel. The conference featured presentations of proposed joint ventures and other economic opportunities for Israeli investors and there were exhibitions of Kazakh industrial and agricultural production.⁷³⁹ While at the conference, Nazarbayev also expressed his hope that Israel would be well represented at the Eurasia Economic Summit of the World Economic Forum held in Astana in late April 2000.⁷⁴⁰

By early 2001 Kazakhstan had benefited from the measures taken to increase trade and investment as evidenced by the fact that Israeli investments in Kazakhstan exceeded \$270 million.⁷⁴¹ Furthermore, *Eurasianet.org* noted that “officials... moved in 2001 to facilitate commerce, especially in agriculture, medicine, telecommunications, and technology.”⁷⁴² There were further benefits from the creation of a bilateral commission to explore ways to deepen and expand the relationship. On 3 April 2001 a joint Israeli-Kazakh committee was created to “examine trade issues”⁷⁴³ in order to create greater economic links. Also during this phase of the relationship, customs procedures were simplified in order to speed the

⁷³⁸ “About Kazakhstan-Israeli relations,” <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>.

⁷³⁹ “Total volume of Israeli investments to Kazakhstan,” *Economic News*, 6 April 2000.

⁷⁴⁰ “Total volume Israeli investments.”

⁷⁴¹ See Kazakhstan country page, <http://www.ncsj.org/kazakhstan>.

⁷⁴² Antoine Blua, “Israel Emerges as a Player in Central Asia,” *Eurasianet.org*, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

⁷⁴³ Blua, “Israel Emerges,” <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

transit of international commerce between the two nations.⁷⁴⁴ This development had immediate and obvious results in the recorded foreign trade levels in Israel because the Central Bureau of Statistics does not officially record trade until it has been released from customs.

The number of joint ventures increased considerably during the last three years of the Israeli-Kazakh relationship examined in this thesis. In spring 1992, there were only three Israeli businesses active in Kazakhstan. At the time of the Investment in Kazakhstan conference in Israel (April 2000), 76 Israel firms were operating in Kazakhstan with a total investment of \$188 million, and there was a further \$50 million invested in the agricultural sector.⁷⁴⁵ This was a significant increase in commercial activity in the span of just a decade.

Lieberman's 2001 Trade Promotion Tour

In July 2001 Israel's Minister for Infrastructure, Avigdor Liberman, paid a high-profile official promotion visit to Kazakhstan.⁷⁴⁶ This was the first such visit since Natan Sharansky's June 1998 trade visit. Liberman—a Russian speaking Israeli émigré from Moldova in the former Soviet Union—largely took on the Israeli government's unofficial Central Asia portfolio from Sharansky. According to the *American Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Kazakh Service*, Liberman met with Kazakh Prime Minister Tokayev in Astana.⁷⁴⁷ Liberman and his delegation of Israeli executives also met with Kazakh businessmen, and their discussions focused on

⁷⁴⁴ Blua, "Israel Emerges," <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

⁷⁴⁵ "Economic News Digest."

⁷⁴⁶ "Motives of bilateral relations," <http://www.qodsna.com> (accessed 30 April 2006).

⁷⁴⁷ "Israeli Minister Visit's Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan," *Eurasianet.org*, <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/kyrgyzstan/hypermail/200107/0022.html> (accessed 14 August 2001), citing an *RFE/RL Kazakh Service* report.

increasing trade volumes and increasing Israeli investment in aircraft construction and energy sectors.⁷⁴⁸

In a sign of the close ties between Israel and Almaty, it was announced during this visit that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon would visit Kazakhstan in November 2001.⁷⁴⁹ The announcement was made by Kazakh Prime Minister Tokayev's press office,⁷⁵⁰ not by the Israeli delegation, in a sign of Kazakhstan's desire to stress the closeness of the relationship. In a statement designed to emphasize the solidity of the relationship, Liberman noted that Sharon "is very much interested in this visit and is sure that it is to take place be what may."⁷⁵¹ Sharon's visit, however, did not take place due to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and the ensuing global war on terrorism.

By the time of the Liberman visit, annual trade turnover between Israel and Kazakhstan had reached \$17 million,⁷⁵² up 210 percent in just two years.⁷⁵³ In July 2001, Kazakh exports to Israel consisted of agricultural products and precious metals, while Kazakhstan imported a range of Israeli goods, including machinery and equipment, agricultural products, chemicals, plastics and rubber goods, jewelry, and precious metals.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁴⁸ "Israel PM Will Visit Kazakhstan After Trade Group's Talks," *Dow Jones International News*, 9 July 2001.

⁷⁴⁹ See "Israeli Minister Visits Kazakhstan," <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/kyrgyzstan/hypermail/200107/0022.html> (accessed 14 August 2001), or "Israel PM Will Visit Kazakhstan After Trade Group's Talks," *Dow Jones International News*, 9 July 2001.

⁷⁵⁰ "Israel PM Will Visit."

⁷⁵¹ Oral Karpishev, "Israeli premier to pay official visit to Kazakhstan," *Itar-TASS Weekly News*, 9 July 2001.

⁷⁵² "Israeli Minister Visits Kazakhstan," <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/kyrgyzstan/hypermail/200107/0022.html> (accessed 14 August 2001).

⁷⁵³ "Israel PM Will Visit."

⁷⁵⁴ Karpishev, "Israeli premier pay official."

In 2001, it was noted that trade ties between Israel and Kazakhstan “have grown exponentially in recent years... double the amount registered in 1999.”⁷⁵⁵ In order to further demonstrate this upward trend, it is useful to note that for the first seven months of 2005, according to the Kazakh Ministry of Industry and Trade, trade turnover rose to \$460 million, more than double what it was in the preceding year.⁷⁵⁶

Major Commercial Investment, 1999–2001

In the last period of this study, commercial relations included progress in several areas such as the transformation of development projects into private sector enterprises, gold production and extraction, the enrichment of uranium yellowcake, the establishment of private sector medical clinics, and space launches. An examination of the major developments in these sectors follows.

Table 6.6 Major Israeli Projects, 1999–2001

Year	Project	Sector	Business(es) Involved	Contract size (where known)
1999	Purchase of Tselinnyy Mining-Chemical Combine	Industrial	KazSubton, Leviev Group	\$0.3m
1999	Investment in TMCC project	Industrial	KazSubton, Leviev Group	\$1.5m
1999	Investment in medical clinics	Medical	Center for Israeli Medicine	NA
2000	Drip irrigation project and greenhouse construction	Agricultural	MASHAV	NA
2000	Establishment of camel dairy farms	Agricultural	not known	NA
2001-02	Vasilkovskoye gold project	Industrial	Leviev Group	\$134m

Sources: Israel Government Yearbook; Itar-TASS; Dow Jones; Deutsche Press-Agentur; Times of Central Asia; author's research.

⁷⁵⁵ Blua, “Israel Emerges,” <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed on 21 August 2001).

⁷⁵⁶ “About Kazakhstan-Israeli relations,” <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>.

In the late 1990s, Israel's Leviev Group launched a joint venture with the government of Kazakhstan to extract gold from the Vasilkovskoye gold deposit in Astana.⁷⁵⁷ In addition to its other natural resources, Kazakhstan had been rumored to possess a major gold deposit of world-class proportions.⁷⁵⁸ Lev Leviev is an active supporter of Israeli investment in Kazakhstan, serves as honorary consul of Kazakhstan in Israel,⁷⁵⁹ and is president of both the Federation of Jewish Communities of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Bukharan Jewish Congress.⁷⁶⁰ Leviev made much of his fortune in the diamond trade and has since become "one of the Jewish world's pre-eminent philanthropists."⁷⁶¹ His charitable gifts have funded Jewish schools and social welfare programs throughout Kazakhstan.

Under the terms of the Vasilkovskoye agreement, the Leviev Group, "represented by its Dutch subsidiary Floodgate," would control a 60 percent stake in the venture through which it was hoped to produce about five to six tons of gold per year.⁷⁶² However, as of early January 2001, the Kazakh government had yet to resolve a taxation qualification dispute.⁷⁶³ As a result, the Vasilkovskoye project did not proceed, and it was predicted at the time to "not go fully on stream until 2002."⁷⁶⁴ Nonetheless, as one of the largest investors in Kazakhstan, this delay did not have negative repercussions on either Leviev's investments specifically, nor on Israeli-Kazakh relations generally. In fact, the Vasilkovskoye project dovetails nicely with another mining operation of the Leviev Group.

⁷⁵⁷ "2002 the Start for Vasilkovskoye Gold Project," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 4 January 2001.

⁷⁵⁸ Jan Kutina, PhD (Department of Chemistry, Global Tectonics and Metallogeny Laboratory, American University), discussion with the author, summer 1998, Washington, DC.

⁷⁵⁹ "About Kazakhstan-Israeli relations," <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>.

⁷⁶⁰ Michael S. Arnold, "Diamond mogul and philanthropist has ear of fellow Jews, world leaders," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 3 March 2003.

⁷⁶¹ Arnold, "Diamond mogul and philanthropist."

⁷⁶² "2002 Start for Vasilkovskoye."

⁷⁶³ "2002 Start for Vasilkovskoye."

⁷⁶⁴ See "Limping Kazakh uranium plant sold off to Israeli company," *Interfax-Kazakhstan news agency* (Almaty), in Russian, 3 May 1999, in *BBC Monitoring*, 3 May 1999, and "2002 Start for Vasilkovskoye."

Part of the plans for the Vasilkovskoye project proposed for the raw gold ore to be processed by another Leviev subsidiary, KazSabton.⁷⁶⁵ KazSabton was formed in April 1999. The Kazakh portion of the new enterprise was the old Tselinnyy Mining-Chemical Combine (TMCC), whose uranium plant had failed to sell in January and February 1999 at its original asking price of over 2 billion tenge (~\$17.5 million).⁷⁶⁶ The Israeli portion of the new enterprise was Sabton, a subsidiary of Leviev's Africa Israel Investments Ltd. In April 1999, Sabton Ltd outbid national firm Kazatomprom for TMCC, and reportedly paid 34.8 million tenge (~\$314,000), much lower than the earlier asking price.⁷⁶⁷ However, the TMCC uranium plant carried significant debt and owed back pay to its workers in excess of 270 million tenge (~\$2.8 million). Within six weeks of ownership, parent firm Africa Israel invested a further \$1.5 million in production-related expenses at KazSabton, and announced plans to clear all debts and wage arrears within two to five years.⁷⁶⁸

KazSubton is involved in the production of uranium yellowcake for the national nuclear corporation Kazatomprom.⁷⁶⁹ From a security perspective, it is interesting to note that Kazakhstan has allowed a foreign firm to be partly responsible for the production of uranium yellowcake. While Kazakhstan is not the only developing nation to operate in this fashion,⁷⁷⁰ it is certainly intriguing to observe that a component of Kazakhstan's critical national infrastructure is being partially run by an Israeli business.

⁷⁶⁵ Israeli industrialist Lev Leviev also owns Sabton Ltd which produces "polymetals and chemical products, plus gold" as well as "Kazofat, a phosphate fertilizer producer." See "2002 Start for Vasilkovskoye."

⁷⁶⁶ Based upon the exchange rate at the time of the contract of approximately 114 tenge to one dollar, "Limping Kazakh uranium plant," in *BBC Monitoring*, 3 May 1999.

⁷⁶⁷ "Kazakh uranium plant sold by international tender," *Interfax news agency* (Moscow), in English, 16 April 1999, in *BBC Monitoring*, 16 April 1999.

⁷⁶⁸ "Israeli company invests in Kazakh uranium mine," *Interfax news agency* (Moscow), in English, 24 June 1999, in *BBC Monitoring*, 24 June 1999.

⁷⁶⁹ "2002 Start for Vasilkovskoye."

⁷⁷⁰ Niger is perhaps the best known example of this trend; the French nuclear services conglomerate Comiga dominates the industry.

The production of uranium yellowcake is simply the first stage in the nuclear enrichment process. To transform yellowcake into weapons-grade uranium, much more processing is required and Kazakhstan has been certified as no longer engaging in those processes. Yellowcake—with some further non-military processing—is suitable for civilian uses; however, it could also serve as an inferior component in a radiological dispersal device, more commonly known as a 'dirty bomb.' The Arabic and Persian press have failed to criticize Israel's investment in Kazakhstan's production of yellowcake. This is surprising, given that a Jewish firm is active in controlling components of the nuclear fuel cycle in 'Muslim' Kazakhstan.

In the agricultural sector, during August 2000, MASHAV trainers launched a new project at the Kunarly farm in the Enbekshi-Kazakh district of Almaty province. This new project was designed to increase irrigation, support the construction of a demonstration greenhouse, and transform the facility into a private sector enterprise.⁷⁷¹ In 1999, the Israeli Foreign Ministry noted that hundreds of Kazakh participants had received agricultural training in Israel through various MASHAV courses, and MASHAV trainers and experts in Kazakhstan continued to establish model agricultural farms.⁷⁷² In 2000, Israeli dairy firms began to export their knowledge of camel-raising, and they began to assist in the establishment of camel dairy farms in Kazakhstan.⁷⁷³

During this period Israel established a series of medical and dental clinics in Kazakhstan such as the Center for Israeli Medicine (CIM) in Almaty.⁷⁷⁴ This center provides private medical care and for more complicated procedures, CIM facilitates the travel of Kazakh nationals to Israel as so-called medical tourists. These Israeli

⁷⁷¹ "Kazakh Farmers to Continue Israeli Project," *Times of Central Asia* (Bishkek), 31 August 2000.

⁷⁷² "Ministry of Foreign Affairs: The Year in Review," *Israel Government Year Book, 1999*, <http://www.israel.org/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0gb10> (accessed 5 March 2001).

⁷⁷³ "Israeli dairy farmer prefers camels to cows," *Deutsche Press-Agentur*, 14 December 2000.

⁷⁷⁴ Center of Israeli Medicine, <http://www.cim.escort.kz/eng/cimplus.htm>.

clinics are successful because Israeli techniques and technologies are perceived to be among the best of those offered in Kazakhstan.⁷⁷⁵ One Kazakh commentator observed that this Israeli success could be attributed to the “Soviet-era perception” lingering in Kazakhstan that Jews make “good doctors, especially dentists,”⁷⁷⁶ while another analyst noted that because Soviet Jews were active in the fields of medicine and dentistry during Soviet times, this continues to be a successful field for Israeli investment.⁷⁷⁷

A final important area of Israeli-Kazakh collaboration has been the tacit cooperation between the two states on the launching of satellites, including ones with military applications. An example of this cooperation was the December 1999 launch of the Eros satellite. A joint Israeli-US satellite “based on the ‘Ofeq’ series of military imaging satellites,” Eros had a ground resolution capability of just one-meter, and was widely understood to be focused on monitoring Iran.⁷⁷⁸ Towards the end of the time period covered in this study, several Israeli satellites were launched from the Baykonur cosmodrome in central Kazakhstan.

While the satellites have actually been put into orbit with Russian spacecraft under contract to Russian entities, this demonstrates the mutuality of security planning in Israel and Almaty. The facilities at Baykonur are technically under lease to the Russian state; in the past, however, Almaty has been able to exert a de facto veto power over space launches from its territory following safety concerns and payment issues.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷⁵ Kuzmin, interview.

⁷⁷⁶ Rashid Dyusseмбаev (Editor-in-Chief, *The Kazakhstan Monitor*), interview with the author, 25 January 2005, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

⁷⁷⁷ Yerkin Tukumov (Deputy Director, Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies), interview with the author, 26 January 2005, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

⁷⁷⁸ “Russia to launch Israeli-US imaging satellite,” *Globes* website (Tel Aviv), in English, 1 March 1999, in *BBC SWB* MEW/0579[26] (9 March 1999).

⁷⁷⁹ “Focus—Kazakhs Enforce Launch Ban in Row with Russia,” *Reuters*, 9 July 1999.

SECURITY COOPERATION

In the final period of the relationship examined in this study, Israeli-Kazakh security cooperation focused on counter-terrorism coordination. Other areas of joint cooperation included the delivery of an Israeli military field hospital to the Kazakh Republican Center for Catastrophic Medicine.⁷⁸⁰

Counter-Terrorism Coordination

During the last phase of the relationship, counter-terrorism coordination witnessed increased cooperation. Prior to the start of the global war on terror, Israel and Almaty discussed "bilateral cooperation in the sphere of fight[ing] against terrorism."⁷⁸¹ This was first publicly suggested following the July 2001 visit to Kazakhstan led by Avigdor Liberman, who proposed that the two nations participate in intelligence sharing in order to fight terrorism.⁷⁸² According to the Kazakh Embassy in Israel and *Kazakhstan Today*, the two states have also signaled their desire to cooperate on combating "illegal migration, illicit drug trafficking" and to improve their "interaction in the area of public security protection and legal order."⁷⁸³ Such cooperation is believed to exist although independent confirmation does not exist.

Following the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States, it was reported that Israel began "supplying the US with an extraordinary amount of behind-the-scenes intelligence assistance and security advice." Washington's request for intelligence from Israel on Central Asia shows recognition that the Israeli ability to

⁷⁸⁰ "Kazakhs get Israeli military field hospital," *Kazakh Radio first program* (Almaty), in Russian, 6 September 2000, in *BBC Monitoring*, 6 September 2000.

⁷⁸¹ "Kazakhstan and Israel Need Agreement on Crime Control," Statement of the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the State of Israel, n.d., <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>, quoting *Kazakhstan Today*, n.d.

⁷⁸² Blua, "Israel Emerges," <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav081501.shtml> (accessed 21 August 2001).

⁷⁸³ "Kazakhstan and Israel Need Agreement," <http://www.kazakhemb.org.il>.

monitor events and collect intelligence was much more advanced than that of other nations. Specifically, Israel had "better intelligence and stronger relations with... Kazakhstan" than the United States or other western nations had at the time. This was partially attributed to the large number of Israelis who had roots in the region and were familiar with local languages. Moreover, due to the region's proximity to Israel's enemies, Israeli intelligence agencies had devoted considerable human and electronic collection resources.⁷⁸⁴

As of January 2005, Kazakh cooperation with the Israeli embassy and Israeli counter-terrorism agencies had been described by one Kazakh official as "mutually enthusiastic" entailed monitoring extremists "perhaps in Kazakhstan... with Middle Eastern connections."⁷⁸⁵ Note, however, that because the official stated "perhaps in Kazakhstan," the possibility exists that Israeli and Kazakh counter-terrorism officials cooperate outside of Kazakhstan. Any such cooperative programs, if they exist, have never been publicly acknowledged.

KAZAKHSTAN AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Since Kazakh independence, President Nazarbayev has repeatedly called for a peaceful, negotiated settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict. In one of his first discussions with Nazarbayev in April 1992, Ambassador Levin cemented the Kazakh position vis-à-vis Israel and the peace process. At that time Nazarbayev "affirmed" to Levin "that Kazakhstan was interested in a peaceful settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict."⁷⁸⁶ On 14 April 1992, several days after Israel and Kazakhstan officially

⁷⁸⁴ Janine Zacharia, "Israel supplies US with Central Asia intelligence," *The Jerusalem Post*, 5 October 2001.

⁷⁸⁵ Interview with Kazakh Foreign Ministry official held at the UN Counter Terrorism Conference, 27 January 2005, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

⁷⁸⁶ Robert O. Freedman, "Israel and Central Asia: A Preliminary Analysis," *Central Asia Monitor*, no. 2 (1993): p. 17, citing *Moscow Interfax*, 10 April 1992, in FBIS-FSU-92 (14 April 1992), p. 56.

established full diplomatic relations, Moscow's *Interfax Radio* declared that both Kazakhstan and Israel were committed to a peaceful resolution between Israelis and Palestinians saying that "the two sides stated that they favored a diplomatic solution to the Palestinian problem."⁷⁸⁷

There are striking similarities between Nazarbayev's comments to Arafat in 1991 regarding Palestine and his remarks to Levin on relations with Israel in 1992. In both instances, Nazarbayev's statements secured positive relations; Nazarbayev was careful not to upset either side and instead offered remarks which signified Kazakhstan's desire to maintain open relations with both peoples while maintaining a balanced approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This proportionate position in dealing with both the Israelis and the Palestinians was further demonstrated on 31 April 1992 when Nazarbayev spoke with *Yediot Ahronoth* and stated that Kazakhstan's "approach to rival sides in the Middle East is even-handed."⁷⁸⁸

While Nazarbayev has led Kazakhstan in this direction, he is not the only one in the Kazakh government professing such an even tone on arguably one of the most potentially volatile topics in international relations. One Kazakh political analyst noted that many throughout the government believe there is "no one right side—not all Palestinians are terrorists, and not all Israeli policies are good."⁷⁸⁹ En route to Israel in January 1995, *Mazhilis* Speaker Abish Kekilbayevich praised Israel and explained his country's position on the peace process as follows:

Kazakhstan is interested in deepening the process of reducing tension and improving the peace process and mutual cooperation among states of the Middle East. And we note with great satisfaction those positive steps

⁷⁸⁷ Jacob Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in Asia: Garrison State Diplomacy* (London, 2004), p. 438.

⁷⁸⁸ Carol R. Saivetz, "Central Asia: Emerging Relations with the Arab States and Israel," in *Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects*, ed. Hafeez Malik (London, 1994), p. 322, quoting *Yediot Ahronoth*, 31 April 1992, p. 18.

⁷⁸⁹ Tukumov, interview.

made thanks to the unusual approach of the Israeli leadership, as a result of which such important documents as the agreement with Jordan and Palestine were signed. We hope that these processes will be developed further.⁷⁹⁰

The Kazakh Foreign Ministry, in a statement issued in October 1995, stated that

Positive changes in the Middle East leading to peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict should become irreversible in the interests of establishing mutual confidence, developing broad economic cooperation in the region, and creating an integral security system in Asia.⁷⁹¹

The Foreign Ministry has further said that

Kazakhstan is for fair settlement of confrontation with full account of legitimate interests and rights of the Israeli and Palestinian people and welcomes recent significant signs of commitment to peace and cooperation on the part of both sides. Such a settlement should also take care of the rightful concerns of other sides involved to ensure that peace and confidence prevail in the region.⁷⁹²

These statements reflect the even-handed course on which Nazarbayev had set Kazakh policy with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. One way in which Kazakhstan has sought to transform those words into actions has been through the Conference for Security and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. The October 1995 CIMTA conference in Almaty⁷⁹³ was the first time that the Israelis and Palestinians had come together under Kazakh auspices to discuss issues of mutual concern.

⁷⁹⁰ "Kazakh Speaker Optimistic on Relations with Israel," *Kazakh Radio Network* (Almaty) in Russian, 0700 GMT 9 January 1995, in FBIS-CE-95 (10 January 1995), p. 27.

⁷⁹¹ Aras, "Post-Cold War Realities," p. 73, citing *BBC SWB*, 4 October 1995, SU 2425, p. G/5.

⁷⁹² Website of the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, n.d., <http://www.kazakhstanembassy.org.uk/cgi-bin/index/127>.

⁷⁹³ "Kazakhstan: Nazarbayev hosts second Conference for Security in Asia," *labyrinth: Central Asia Quarterly* (winter 1995): p. 11.

According to one analyst, Nazarbayev's playing the role of a mediator and honest broker between Israel and the Palestinians arises in part out of his drive to seek a good balance and build a dialogue between Kazakhstan and Muslim countries.⁷⁹⁴ This insight supports the notion that Kazakhstan seeks to capitalize on its efforts at mediation not just to advance ties with Israel, but also to build commonality with fellow Muslim nations. In this sense, Kazakhstan's orientation on the Arab-Israeli conflict is both balanced and thinking toward the future.

Israeli officials confided to this author that their government has been appreciative of Kazakh efforts to work toward a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Furthermore, Israeli officials have stated that not only do they feel comfortable operating in Kazakhstan, but also that the Israeli Foreign Ministry is of the opinion that Kazakhstan (as a Muslim country that has a good relationship with Israel) is in a good position to advance peace in the Middle East.⁷⁹⁵ When Israeli President Herzog first met with Nazarbayev in December 1992, he expressed Israel's support for the creation of an Asian security conference and pledged that Israel would participate in its activities.⁷⁹⁶ Indeed, the Kazakh initiative to create a security framework for Asia is the only international venue organized by a Muslim nation that has included Israel.

The possibility that Kazakhstan would align itself against Israel on the issue of Palestine was successfully blunted by of Israeli diplomacy and investment. As one of Israel's key concerns, it was vital that Israel secure a positive relationship with Kazakhstan.

⁷⁹⁴ Tukumov, interview.

⁷⁹⁵ Based upon discussion with Israeli officials in Almaty and Jerusalem.

⁷⁹⁶ "Israeli President Holds Talks with Nazarbayev," *Itar-TASS World Service* in Russian, 0829 GMT 31 December 1992, in FBIS-CE-92 (31 December 1992), p. 59.

Kazakhstan and the al-Aqsa Intifadah

On 12 October 2000, two IDF reservists were captured and subsequently lynched by a Palestinian mob in Ramallah. Following the eruption of violence in Israel and the Palestinian Territories in the wake of the al-Aqsa Intifadah (September 2000), the Kazakh Foreign Ministry released a statement condemning the violence and urging a return to peaceful negotiations under UN auspices. The statement said that "the current situation not only drives the continuation of the peace talks into a corner, but presents a serious threat to a peace process in the Middle East." It expressed concern for the victims and stated that the "escalation of violence and new human victims in the Middle East may be avoided only by effective and coordinated measures with the usage of the corresponding mechanisms of the UN and other international and regional organizations." The Kazakh statement also reiterated the Kazakh position calling for stability in the region and the "resumption of negotiations to settle the conflict."⁷⁹⁷

The Kazakh Foreign Ministry's remarks were very much in line with previous Kazakh statements calling for a negotiated settlement to the conflict. These remarks also followed more recent Kazakh positions such as those expressed by Nazarbayev during Arafat's 1999 visit to Almaty in which he advocated a greater role for the UN in the peace process.

Nevertheless, despite the Foreign Ministry's condemnations of violence, when the United Nations General Assembly passed an Emergency Special Session Resolution (ES-10/7) condemning Israeli actions in East Jerusalem and the Occupied Territories on 20 October 2000, Kazakhstan abstained. This is noteworthy because it marked a shift in how Kazakhstan voted on these issues at the General Assembly.

⁷⁹⁷ Oral Karpishev, "UN and other institutions may help to avoid violence-FMinistry," *Itar-TASS Weekly News*, 14 October 2000.

The emergency resolution called on Israel to observe the Geneva Conventions and it supported the resumption of negotiations that would lead to a speedy conclusion and final settlement of the peace talks.⁷⁹⁸ Kazakhstan had voted in favor of prior General Assembly resolutions calling on Israel to observe the Geneva Conventions each time they came up for a vote (A/RES/51/132, A/RES/52/65, A/RES/53/54, and A/RES/54/77) and had always voted in favor of resolutions advocating a negotiated settlement to the conflict. However, in the 54th Session of the General Assembly during which Kazakhstan abstained on the emergency resolution, the Kazakh delegation no longer voted in favor to investigate Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories (A/RES/55/130, abstain), or to call on Israel to observe the Geneva Conventions (A/RES/55/131, chose not to vote), or to condemn Israeli human rights violations (A/RES/55/133, chose not to vote). The position taken by the Kazakh delegation on human rights recalled abstentions in 1993 (A/RES/48/41[A]) and 1994 (A/RES/49/36[A]) on similar resolutions.

Thus, although the Kazakh Foreign Ministry continued to call for the active involvement of the international community in helping to secure a peaceful settlement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, when presented with an opportunity to vote on issues related to the conflict in October 2000, for the first time since joining the UN Kazakhstan's voting pattern had begun to change. This shift is significant because it is indicative of how Israel's policy of constructive engagement with Kazakhstan led to a softening of Kazakhstan's position on issues related to Israel in the UN General Assembly.

⁷⁹⁸ For more on UN General Assembly Emergency Session Resolution ES-10/7, consult the United Nations Bibliographic Information System for the text of the resolution, <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/710/92/PDF/N0071092.pdf?OpenElement>.

ANALYSIS OF KAZAKHSTAN'S UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTES

Over the course of Israel's relationship with Almaty examined in this thesis, Kazakhstan's voting position in the United Nations General Assembly changed. In an analysis of the Kazakh delegation's voting record on General Assembly resolutions that were passed related to the Middle East and considered hostile to Israel, several patterns emerge. The first is that the general frequency with which Kazakhstan voted in favor of resolutions critical to Israel decreased over the period examined. The second pattern to emerge is that Kazakhstan's position on resolutions considered hostile to Israel also changed. From these changes, it becomes evident that Israel's objective to blunt potential Kazakh hostility to Israel was successful in moderating the position taken by Kazakhstan in the General Assembly.

On several issues related to Palestinian rights and Israel's actions in the Occupied Territories, the Kazakh delegation's position shifted from voting in favor of these resolutions, to either casting abstentions or choosing not to vote. On occasions when no vote was registered, it cannot be known with certainty that the Kazakh delegation was present for the vote. In most cases anecdotal evidence exists to suggest that the Kazakhs chose not to vote: Kazakh votes on other resolutions were recorded before and after the resolution in question.

PHASE I: 1991-1995

With the exception of one resolution, Kazakhstan cast a ballot on every resolution in the United Nations General Assembly related to the Middle East considered hostile to Israel examined for this thesis in the period from 1992 to 1995; Kazakhstan did not join the UN until 1992. The only time the Kazakh delegation did

not vote occurred in the 47th Session (1992) on the subject of cooperation between the UN and the Arab League (A/RES/47/12), and it is not known if the delegation was not present or simply chose not to vote.

In 1992, Kazakhstan voted with Iran 22 times, or 81.48 percent of the time, as opposed only once with Israel. The only time Kazakhstan and Israel voted together in 1992 was on Resolution 47/82 when both nations voted against the universal right to self-determination (A/RES/47/82). On three other occasions Kazakhstan cast abstentions on resolutions critical of Israel on such topics as the occupation of the Golan (A/RES/47/63[A]), the question of Palestine (A/RES/47/64[D]), and on the Special Committee to investigate Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories (A/RES/47/70[A]).

In 1993, out of 11 resolutions passed that were critical of Israel, Kazakhstan only voted in favor of only six. The Kazakh delegation abstained on the condemnations of the human rights situation in the territories (A/RES/48/41[A]), the occupation of the Golan (A/RES/48/59[B]), and Israel's nuclear program (A/RES/48/78), as well as a resolution calling for self-determination and independence (A/RES/48/94). Resolution 48/78 called for Israel to renounce nuclear arms and join the NPT. The Israeli and Kazakh delegations cast the same vote only once during the 48th Session, when they both voted against a resolution calling for non-interference in national elections (A/RES/48/124).

During the 49th Session of the General Assembly in 1994, on nine resolutions hostile to Israel that were passed, Kazakhstan voted in favor of seven and abstained twice. This was the first year that Kazakhstan voted to condemn Israel's occupation of the Golan (A/RES/49/87). (This position was repeated again in the years from 1995 to 1998.) In 1994, Kazakhstan also continued to abstain on the question of the

human rights situation in the Occupied Territories (A/RES/49/36[A]) and abstained on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East (A/RES/49/78).

In 1995 Kazakhstan voted in favor of six out of nine resolutions passed in the General Assembly. Abstentions were cast on the situation in the Middle East (A/RES/50/22[A]), Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories (A/RES/50/29[A]), and on the risk of nuclear proliferation (A/RES/50/73).

It can be seen from these tallies that during the first phase of the relationship (1991–1995), Kazakhstan's voting pattern has been sympathetic to Israel on a number of issues including the subject of Israel's nuclear deterrent, Israel's NPT status, the Golan, and the human rights situation in the Occupied Territories. On proliferation concerns and the NPT, Kazakhstan has not lent its voice to the chorus of nations critical of Israel. This position is noteworthy because it runs counter to Nazarbayev's calls for all nations to accede to the NPT, and it is in direct opposition to Kazakhstan's position on the dangers of nuclear proliferation as discussed earlier in this chapter. It would appear that Kazakhstan's position in the General Assembly not only recognizes Israel's special security requirements but also represents sympathy for Israel's stated position of nuclear ambiguity.

PHASE II: 1996–1998

In 1996, Kazakhstan voted in favor of 26 out of 30 resolutions hostile to Israel that were passed in the General Assembly. In this year, the four abstentions were cast on resolutions on the situation in the Middle East; Palestinian property rights; the risk of nuclear proliferation; and Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories. Kazakhstan voted in favor of resolutions critical of Israel's presence in Jerusalem and the Golan and resolutions critical of Israeli human rights practices and Israeli settlements.

In 1997 Kazakhstan's voting position on issues related to Israel continued to harden, and the Kazakh delegation voted in favor of an Emergency Special Session resolution condemning Israel's illegal action in East Jerusalem and the Occupied Territories (A/RES/52/ES/10-3). It is interesting to note that Kazakhstan did not vote in favor of a resolution calling for the Palestinian right of self-determination; this is a hint of a break in the pattern yet to come. The abstentions cast were again on resolutions on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and on Israeli practices in the territories.

In the 53rd Session in 1998, on the 22 resolutions considered to be hostile to the State of Israel, Kazakhstan voted in favor of every one. The Kazakh delegation voted with the Iranian delegation 95 percent of the time; the only divergent vote in 1998 was on Resolution 53/42 calling for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question, when Iran chose not to vote. During the 53rd Session, Israel voted against 21 resolutions and abstained just once.

During this phase of the relationship (1996–1998), Kazakhstan's voting frequency on resolutions considered hostile to Israel steadily increased until it reached 100 percent in 1998. This included votes in favor of resolutions critical of Israel's presence in Jerusalem and the Golan, Israeli human rights practices, Israeli settlements, and an Emergency Special Session resolution on Israeli actions in the Occupied Territories. In the final phase of the Israeli-Kazakh relationship under examination, this pattern would break.

PHASE III: 1999–2001

An analysis of Kazakhstan's voting behavior in the UN General Assembly on resolutions regarding the Middle East and Israel shows that Kazakhstan altered its

voting pattern in the period from 1999 to 2001. A shift in the voting behavior of the Kazakh delegation to the UN General Assembly can be seen beginning in 1999. Whereas Kazakhstan had previously voted as Iran did on issues related to the Middle East and Israel, beginning with the 53rd Session in 1999 that pattern ends.

This shift in Kazakhstan's voting patterns at the 54th Session of the General Assembly begins several months before President Nazarbayev made his second official visit to Israel, coinciding with the preparations for his visit. One of the preparations for Nazarbayev's visit included Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Tokayev's trip to Israel in September 1999 to discuss mutual relations and CICA. While this is not to assert that Tokayev's visit caused the shift, it does suggest that there is a connection between the timing of the preparation for Nazarbayev's return visit to Israel and the Kazakh delegation's shifting voting pattern. The shift also occurs at time when Kazakhstan is beginning to assert its own independent foreign policy.

Of the 21 resolutions considered to be hostile to the State of Israel which passed in the General Assembly in 1999, Kazakhstan voted in favor of only seven, or 31.81 percent. The Kazakh delegation abstained five times (23 percent of the time) on a range of issues such as the fate of the Golan, UN procedural matters related to the Palestinian question, and on issues such as Israeli practices and Palestinian sovereignty over natural resources in the Occupied Territories. Kazakhstan had never cast so many abstentions on resolutions related to Israel in the General Assembly since it had been admitted to the UN in 1992.

Furthermore, the Kazakh delegation cast no ballot on nine out of 21 occasions (42 percent). Despite UN voting records showing that Kazakhstan did vote on other resolutions on the days in which no Kazakh vote was recorded on resolutions

considered hostile to Israel, it cannot be known with certainty that the Kazakh delegation was present for the hostile resolutions' vote. The last time the Kazakh delegation opted not to cast a vote on a Middle East issue related to Israel was in October 1992 (A/RES/47/12).

In the last phase of the relationship (1999–2001), Kazakhstan's position on resolutions hostile to Israel softened considerably. The Kazakh delegation either abstained or chose not to vote on numerous issues, including the status of the Golan, Israeli human rights practices, implementation of the Geneva Conventions, and several procedural resolutions regarding the role of Palestine. This marked a noticeable departure from the patterns established during the first and second phases of the relationship.

OVERVIEW OF UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTES

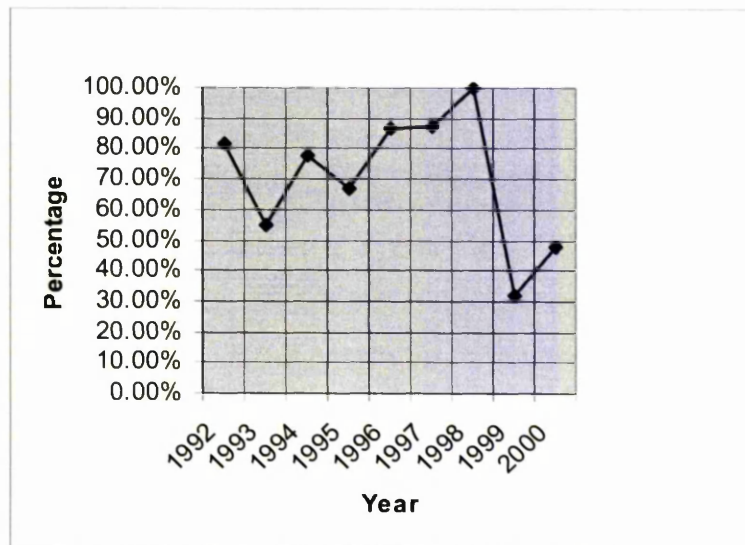
When Kazakhstan first entered the UN in 1992, it voted in favor of 22 out of 27 hostile resolutions, while in 2000 the Kazakh delegation voted in favor of only 11 out of 23 resolutions. Over the course of the ten-year period examined in this chapter, Kazakhstan's voting frequency against Israel (over the nine years in which Kazakhstan was a member of the UN) began at 81.48 percent, and then dropped in 1993 to 54.54 percent (see table 6.7). The pattern that emerges shows Kazakhstan increasingly voting against Israel until the frequency with which Kazakhstan voted in favor of resolutions critical of Israel rose to 100 percent in 1998. During the 53rd Session of the General Assembly Kazakhstan voted in favor of 21 out of 21 resolutions critical of Israel. This trend then dropped significantly in the two last years under examination to 31.81 percent (seven out of 21 votes) and 47.82 percent (11 out of 23 votes) in 1999 and 2000 respectively.

Table 6.7 Kazakh Voting Frequency in Favor of UN General Assembly Resolutions Related to the Middle East Considered Hostile to Israel

Year	Percentage
1992	81.48%
1993	54.54%
1994	77.77%
1995	66.66%
1996	86.66%
1997	87.50%
1998	100.00%
1999	31.81%
2000	47.82%

Sources: UN Bibliographic Information System;
American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise.

Chart 6.1 Kazakh Voting Frequency in Favor of UN General Assembly Resolutions Related to the Middle East Considered Hostile to Israel



Sources: UN Bibliographic Information System;
American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise.

Kazakhstan's position on several issues has changed over time. On the resolutions critical of Israel's occupation of the Golan, the Kazakh delegation abstained for the first two years, and then in 1994 voted in favor of calling for Israel to evacuate the Golan. They continued to vote this way until Kazakhstan abstained in 1999 and 2000. However, on two occasions when additional resolutions were voted

upon which called for Israel to leave the Syrian Golan (A/RES/54/80, 6 December 1999; A/RES/55/134, 8 December 2000), Kazakhstan did not vote. This suggests a clearer interpretation of Kazakh support for the yearly Resolution on the Situation in the Middle East: Golan was based on reasons other than the issue of Israel's occupation of the Golan; most likely based instead upon the General Assembly's calls for a resumption of the peace process under the land-for-peace formula

On resolutions critical of Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories, from 1995–1997 and 1999–2000 Kazakhstan either abstained or did not vote. Abstentions were also cast on resolutions regarding the Special Committee to investigate these practices. This pattern was repeated by the Kazakh delegation on other resolutions on such issues as the right to self-determination; the inalienable rights of the Palestinians; Palestinian property rights; and Palestinian sovereignty over natural resources in the Occupied Territories. On all these resolutions, the Kazakh position went from voting in favor of them to casting abstentions and in some cases, not voting beginning in 1999.

Three trends emerge from this data. First, Kazakhstan softened its position on Israel's human rights practices and the issue of the application of the Geneva Conventions by choosing to abstain or not vote on those resolutions as of 1999. Second, on the occupation of the Golan, the Kazakh delegation's position shifted from abstaining until 1994, to voting against Israel until 1999. Third, Kazakhstan stopped voting to criticize Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories. This demonstrates that during Israel's policy of constructive engagement with Kazakhstan, the Kazakh position on resolutions critical to Israel moderated. As such, Israel's policy objective of working to ensure that Kazakhstan did not align against Israeli interests proved to be successful at the end of the ten-year period under examination in this thesis.

On most of the General Assembly votes considered to be hostile to Israel examined for this thesis, Israel and the United States were the only two countries who consistently voted against or abstained on the resolutions. While Kazakhstan did not adopt the voting habit of Israel or the United States, the Kazakh delegation began to exercise its option to abstain on votes with increased frequency beginning with the 54th Session in 1999. It cannot be known with certainty that this change from voting for hostile resolutions to abstaining from many hostile resolutions indicates a decision to align with Israel; however, it can be observed that this behavior is in marked contrast to the Kazakh voting pattern exhibited in the preceding years. These data suggest that the Kazakh delegation decided to moderate their vote on issues related to Israel while not going as far as to cast the same vote as the Israelis.

A similar pattern of moderating their position can be seen in the votes regarding the Special Committee to investigate Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories. From 1999 onwards, the Kazakh delegation abstained (A/RES/54/176 and A/RES/22/130). On the issue of the Israeli occupation of the Golan, Kazakhstan had voted in favor of condemning Israel from 1994 to 1998. However, in 1999 (A/RES/54/38) and 2000 (A/RES/55/51, the last available vote on this issue covered in this study) Kazakhstan abstained. Similarities can be seen in the votes on Jerusalem. Kazakhstan had previously voted in favor of the General Assembly's calls for Israeli to evacuate East Jerusalem; however, on 1 December 1999 Kazakhstan did not to cast a vote on the resolution (A/RES/54/37). An examination of Kazakhstan's voting record reveals that the Kazakh delegation did vote on other resolutions related to the Middle East that day, including the four resolutions that immediately followed the one on East Jerusalem. This suggests that Kazakhstan, rather than being not present, chose not to vote on East Jerusalem but this cannot be known with certainty.

The shift in Kazakhstan's voting pattern in the United Nations General Assembly demonstrates the successes of Israel's constructive engagement with Kazakhstan. Furthermore, it validates Israel's initial position that through positive links with Almaty, Israel could ensure that Kazakhstan would not devolve into a state hostile to Israel's national security interests. The UN General Assembly voting data suggest that over the course of the period examined in this study, Israel's relationship with Kazakhstan improved because during the same period Kazakhstan's voting in favor of General Assembly resolutions hostile to Israel decreased. Moreover, the Kazakh delegation's shift in position occurred while the trends in trade turnover were rising and the two states were enjoying a resurgence in political activity and security cooperation.

CONCLUSION

In the first ten years of Kazakh independence, Israel built a close relationship with Kazakhstan in the diplomatic arena, with respect to economic and commercial ties, and regarding security cooperation. This relationship reflected Israel's strategic drive to expand its influence so that the emergence of potential threats to its national security were blunted. In this endeavor Israel was successful, in part intentionally and in part due to circumstance. Israel's objectives were all achieved—constructive engagement with Kazakhstan ensured Kazakh neutrality on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (by the end of the period examined, despite Kazakh votes in the General Assembly before 1999) and helped to guarantee that Kazakhstan did not devolve into a state hostile to Israeli interests.

In the first phase of their relationship, Israel was most concerned with how its own security could be jeopardized through either a Kazakh failure to safeguard its

nuclear legacy, the development of a pro-Iranian regime in Almaty, or Kazakhstan's position on Palestine. On the nuclear question, we now know that Israel's fears that Iran would further its own weapons program through Kazakh assistance or negligence were unfounded. Moreover, Kazakhstan was never in a position to 'assist' Iran because control over these nuclear devices was always under Russian control. The completion of their transfer in April 1995 would signal the end of Israel's initial security interest in Kazakhstan.

For its part, Iran realized early in its involvement with the Central Asian republics that the region was not open to emulating Teheran's style of government. The resulting Kazakh-Iranian relationship is therefore as much reflective of Iranian realpolitik as it is of Israeli hopefulness. On the issue of support for Palestine, Israel was best able to marshal its influence. The successes of Israel's objective to keep Kazakhstan neutral on this issue, however, is also the result of the desires of President Nazarbayev and the Kazakh government to balance warm relations with Israel and the West with close ties to the Muslim world. A further component of Israel's success is due to Nazarbayev's desire to be a peacemaker and mediator and his goal of raising Kazakhstan's profile in the international community: this allowed Israel and the Palestinians to have discussions that they otherwise would not have had, at Nazarbayev's invitation.

In the absence of a pressing security threat and because its situation vis-à-vis the Palestinians seemed to be improving, Israel's attentions were directed closer to home in 1996. As a result, the relationship with Kazakhstan suffered from a lack of engagement. Soon, however, until the utility of close ties with Kazakhstan was recognized again: in light of the difficulties that Israel experienced implementing the Oslo Accords, problems with the Syrian track of the peace process, and Israel's

withdrawal from southern Lebanon, constructive engagement with non-Arab Muslim Kazakhstan held many benefits. It demonstrated that Israel was perfectly able to engage a Muslim nation and prosper from the interaction. This had the desired effect of dampening international criticism and diluting anti-Israel bias.

Over the three phases examined in this chapter and the preceding one, Israeli concerns vis-à-vis Kazakhstan and Israel's methods of engagement have been well documented. Jacob Abadi argues that, compared to the other four Central Asian republics, "Kazakhstan seems to have been the most attractive to the Israelis."⁷⁹⁹ The foregoing chapters have shown, through an expansive and detailed examination of the Israeli-Kazakh relationship, that the relationship between Israel and Almaty is both complex and multifaceted. For Israel, Kazakhstan represented a unique convergence of threats and opportunities: the stark dangers of nuclear proliferation and the spread of weapons of mass destruction were coupled with unmatched economic possibilities; against the threatening aspirations of Iran in the region were opportunities to advance Israeli foreign and strategic policies in the area and contain Iranian influence. In short, Israel's relationship with Kazakhstan in the first decade of Kazakh independence proved to be a resounding success for Israel's strategic policies in Central Asia.

⁷⁹⁹ Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition*, p. 436.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

Throughout Israel's history, national security has predominated in its foreign policy; and as this thesis has demonstrated, Israel's complex relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan from 1991 to 2001 were shaped by a desire to advance Israeli national security concerns. Israel was able to create strong and durable friendships with these states through constructive engagement in order to safeguard its national interests. Over the course of the ten-year period examined, Israel successfully achieved its goals in its relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. As a result, Israel succeeded in preventing the emergence of conditions in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan that would have negatively affected Israeli national security.

THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF ISRAELI POLICY

Israel's constructive engagement with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan created multifaceted relationships based on diplomatic and political interactions, development assistance, economic and commercial relations, and security cooperation. Israel used these main four avenues of access to create strong frameworks on which to build solid relationships. Through these relationships, Israel was able to advance its traditional foreign policy objectives and safeguard its national security.

Uzbekistan, the region's most geopolitically strategic and populous state, did not devolve into a hostile regime. In Kazakhstan, the legacy of Soviet nuclear weapons never threatened the State of Israel. In neither republic did political Islam

did not take hold, nor did Iran successfully expand its sphere of influence. Diplomatically, Israel attempted to use its access and influence in Washington to help Uzbekistan. With both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, Israel successfully used trade and investment to facilitate its political overtures. Through trade meetings and economic discussions with the Kazakhs—some of which were held in Jerusalem—the Israelis succeeded in gaining de facto recognition of Israeli Jerusalem from a Muslim nation.

Over the course of the three phases of the Israeli-Uzbek and Israeli-Kazakh relationships, Israel developed stable and secure ties. These ties benefited Israel in the United Nations General Assembly. The voting records of both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan demonstrate that over the course of the first decade of their relationships with Israel, their positions softened on resolutions related to the Middle East considered hostile to Israel. This contributed to Israel's efforts to normalize relations throughout the international community and thereby further shore up its national security.

Post-Soviet Central Asia was perceived by policy makers in Israel to have the potential to adversely affect Israel. Motivated by a fear that the emergence of five more Muslim nations would further skew the balance of power in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel sought to preemptively engage the new republics in order to prevent the development of regimes hostile to Israeli national interests. A deep-seated fear of Iranian influence, the presence of Soviet-era nuclear weapons, concern that Islamist extremism could take hold, and apprehension over the issue of Palestine combined to drive Israel to engage the new republics and ensure that the new post-Soviet leaderships did not align against Israeli interests. Iran was unable to exclude Israel from the region: Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan did not become hostile to Israeli interests. Tashkent and Almaty grew to share Israel's threat perceptions: Soviet-era

weapons, technologies, and materials remained out of the hands of hostile states and powers. Teheran was unable to successfully pull Tashkent or Almaty into its sphere of influence: militant Islam did not take hold in those republics. The peace process in the Middle East was not greatly affected by the independence of the Central Asian republics because they stayed neutral on the conflict. Both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan became secure and stable in their own right. The region's Jewish communities remained safe and immigration to Israel was allowed to continue and even expand. These goals were achieved through the creation of complex and multifaceted relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. These relationships created an environment in which Israel was able to influence the policies and mold the strategic orientations that these newly independent states would take. On all counts, Israeli policy realized what it had set out to achieve.

ISRAEL'S OBJECTIVES IN CENTRAL ASIA

Among Israel's objectives were preventing the spread of Iranian influence within the Muslim states of the former Soviet Union; curbing the development of hostile regimes and the proliferation of WMDs; reducing the emphasis on the Arab world in the Middle East; and diverting attention from the Middle East Peace Process. Israel was further motivated in its actions and policies by its desire to retain its strategic relationship with the United States; to foster the creation of moderate Muslim states; to develop further economic markets; to expand arms sales; and to ensure the protection of Central Asia's local Jewish communities. All of these objectives were attained; most were achieved by Israel's implementation of its strategic policy in the region, though there were some developments that Israel had little impact upon.

SPREAD OF IRANIAN INFLUENCE

As demonstrated in chapter three, Iran had hoped that the end of the Soviet control of Central Asia would mark the successor republics' return to Islam. Iran had ambitiously hoped that it would serve as a model and inspiration for the governments of the new Central Asian republics as they created their own independent governments. The notion that the Iranian style of government could be adopted by Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and become Islamic Republics was quickly discarded. Teheran's aspirations, it was later acknowledged, were untenable because of Iran's ignorance of Soviet Central Asian history and a complete misunderstanding of what the region's governments and people wished for their future.

The idea that Iran could expand its influence and provide support for radical Islamist governments and movements was anathema to Israel. Joint American and Israeli aid programs were designed in the early period of the republics' independence to combat Iranian influence, and Israel received American monies specifically to be used in funding such programs. Early discussions with Tashkent and Almaty focused on the threat from Iran, and both the Uzbek and Kazakh governments agreed with Israel that Iranian meddling was unwelcome. The Uzbeks bore the brunt of Iran's anger at Israel's successes in the region, especially following Foreign Minister Shimon Peres' 1994 visit. Throughout their relationship, Israeli leaders highlighted the dangers posed by Iran and Uzbekistan came to align very closely with Israel's perspective. When Iranian radio broadcast Uzbek language propaganda by the IMU, Uzbekistan was driven even closer towards Israel.

At the end of the period examined in this study, Iran's goals in Central Asia shifted from seeking to export its Islamist revolution to building commercial and

cultural connections with the republics. Kazakhstan did not want Teheran's Islamist revolution but did build commercial connections with Iran. Uzbekistan, with a sizable Tajik-speaking population, was more guarded in its dealings with Iran. By 2001, Iran had not gained any appreciable influence in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan partially due to Israel's success in implementing its foreign and national security policies, and partially because the Uzbek and Kazakh governments were unreceptive to Iran's overtures. In the end, Israel's perception of Iran was shared by both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

DEVELOPMENT OF HOSTILE REGIMES AND THE SPREAD OF WMDs

In the absence of Soviet control, Israeli policy makers feared that governments would emerge in Central Asia that were hostile to Israeli interests. Israel successfully engaged and supported the new secular governments in Tashkent and Almaty, and provided both with critical development assistance, trade, and investment. Israeli entrepreneurs and MASHAV supplied essential technologies to improve agricultural production, expand communications networks, and upgrade deteriorating industrial infrastructures. Israel had an advantage over other countries that could have provided development assistance because of the many well-educated Israeli technicians and trainers who were fluent in Russian and other Central Asian languages. Coupled with government-to-government support in the form of trade and customs agreements, generous grants, loans, and direct investment, this vital assistance helped to stabilize the new republics in the post-Soviet period.

The possibility that Soviet-era nuclear weapons would be transferred out of the former Soviet territories and into Israel's enemies' possession was a very real threat in the early 1990s. Numerous stories and rumors circulated alleging that Iran

had acquired Soviet strategic warheads from Kazakhstan. These fears were fanned by speculation coupled with an absence of understanding of the controls that were in place and the level of communal cooperation that existed between Kazakhstan and Iran. We now know that the weapons Kazakhstan inherited upon its independence were never in danger of being obtained by Islamist extremists, but this should not detract from the importance of the concern at that time.

A further concern arose about orphaned special nuclear materials and unemployed weapons scientists in the region. Lost, misplaced, and generally unaccounted-for industrial radioactive isotopes and the acquisition of such materials by a terrorist organization or organized criminal network raised significant and serious alarm. The fate of Soviet biological warfare scientists and engineers was also troubling. Although much beyond the scope of this thesis, it should be noted that Israel and the United States worked to monitor these scientists, although little material detailing these programs has been made available.

Israel's objective of curbing the spread of these technologies was achieved during the period examined in this thesis. Iran apparently did not advance its WMD programs with Central Asian assistance, although Teheran did maintain a clandestine nuclear weapons program throughout the 1990s. Regular surveys of republics—especially Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan—to search for remnants of the Soviet weapons program have found both Tashkent and Almaty free of any traces of the old weapons programs. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan did not collude with Islamist countries in the production of WMDs during the period examined.

THE EMPHASIS ON THE ARAB WORLD IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Throughout its history, the State of Israel has been very aware of being surrounded and outnumbered by its Arab neighbors. This has placed Israel always on the defensive. To mitigate this, Israel has engaged in several methods to metaphorically expand the Middle East and to build relationships with those nations that lie 'beyond the Arab fence,' most famously through its Periphery Policy. In its dealings with Central Asia, Israel was partially successful in de-emphasizing the position of the Arab world within the context of the Middle East.

Israel did build strong relationships in Central Asia, as demonstrated by the ties with Tashkent and Almaty—in this sense Israel was very successful in expanding the Middle East to include non-Arab Muslim nations not in Israel's immediate vicinity. However, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan cannot counterbalance the clout and power of the Arab states and Iran. Israeli national security policy requires acceptance, existential and diplomatic recognition, normalization, and eventually peace with the Arab world and Iran. As detailed in chapter two, Israel is bound by its situational permanence.

FOCUS ON THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

At the time that Israel established diplomatic relations with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the Madrid Peace Process had yet to begin. As a result, Israeli policy toward Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was focused in large part on securing their neutrality in the Arab-Israeli conflict and on the issue of Palestine. Israel was fearful that the creation of five new Muslim nations would further tip the regional balance in favor of the Arab states, and was especially disconcerted by Kazakhstan's establishment as a de facto nuclear power. Israel was worried that Uzbekistan and

Kazakhstan would align against Israel and support the hard-line 'rejectionist' states. Because of their presumed mineral wealth, Israel dreaded that the new republics would become petro-powers which could support the Palestinians financially and politically, thus effectively subsidizing what Israeli saw as Arab intransigence.

Israel, however, skillfully marshaled Uzbek and Kazakh sympathy for its position. Despite attempts by Yasir Arafat and the PLO, Tashkent and Almaty never enthusiastically supported the Palestinians. President Karimov and President Nazarbayev were welcomed in Ramallah, and Arafat traveled to the region to build support among the Central Asian governments for the Palestinians. However, both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan remained decidedly neutral, and at times were even pro-Israeli throughout the ten years which this thesis examines. The UN General Assembly voting patterns of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan on resolutions related to the Middle East and considered hostile to Israel demonstrate that when presented with opportunities to pressure Israel on the issue of Palestine, Tashkent and Almaty repeatedly did not. This was a triumph of Israel's policy of constructive engagement because it allowed Israel to engage its Arab neighbors on *its* schedule. This allowed Israel to bypass what it perceived as Arab intransigence and instead engaged with other Muslim nations, demonstrating the benefits of ties with Israel, while simultaneously working to combat its anti-Muslim image.

STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES

Israel feared that the end of the Cold War would result in a reduction in Israel's strategic relationship with the United States, but this did not transpire. If anything, Israel's importance to the United States increased over the course of the ten-year period covered in this thesis. A central tenet of Israeli national security policy

has been to secure and retain the patronage of a great power. A relationship such as the one Israel has with the United States has allowed Israel great latitude in its dealings with its Arab neighbors and has permitted Israel to respond unencumbered to threats with little concern for the repercussions. The relationship also provides essential financial support, technology transfers, and weapons sales to Israel. This helps Israel maintain its qualitative edge over its quantitatively superior adversaries.

In order to preserve this vital and strategic relationship, Israel had to reposition itself in order to retain its value to Washington as an indispensable partner in the Middle East. Israel was no longer needed to serve as a bulwark against Communism; instead, Israel positioned itself to combat the rise of militant Islam. Israel was successful: by replacing the Red Menace of Communism with the Green Peril of Islam, Israel was able to recast its importance to its primary benefactor. This new role for Israel was most obviously useful in Central Asia.

In both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, Israel served as a surrogate for American interests, at times providing valuable intelligence to the United States on the region. Israel attempted to use its relationship with Tashkent and Washington to help mend fences in US-Uzbek relations. Further, both Presidents Karimov and Nazarbayev tried to use Israel's extensive influence in Washington for their own benefit.

The United States was pleased to have Israel use its assets to advance pro-Western policies in Central Asia. Israel and the United States shared many of the same concerns about the region and it was here that US-Israeli cooperation reaped many successes during the first ten years: Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan became free of WMDs, Islamists did not come to power, Iran was kept in check, and pro-Western policies informed the rule in both Tashkent and Almaty. In this respect, Israel was very successful and continued to be of great importance to the United States.

CREATION OF MODERATE MUSLIM STATES

One of Israel's primary concerns about Central Asia was that Islamic republics would replace Soviet power in the region. Many of Israel's strategies to help further its national security and foreign policy objectives in the region would have been constrained had the newly independent republics chosen to pursue that path. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan did not become nations ruled by Islamic law, but not because of Israeli actions alone. Presidents Karimov and Nazarbayev very firmly pursued secular paths. The creation of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan as secular states is much more the result of their leaders' and indigenous efforts than it was of specific Israeli actions. Israel did contribute in ways that could help create an environment conducive to the formation of secular governments.

There was arguably little that Israel could do to dictate to Tashkent and Almaty what their forms of government should look like in the post-Soviet period. However, what Israel did do is engage the republics in discussions that touched on the roles of religion in government. In the case of Uzbekistan, the Israelis strongly advised Tashkent against adopting the Arabic script because it was thought that using it would facilitate the spread of militant Islam, and Uzbekistan agreed. Of course, Israel knew that adopting Arabic script might also help the spread of anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli propaganda in the republic. In both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan Israel fostered institutions, trade, and development that would help steer the republics away from Islamic government. By extending international support and assistance to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, Israel tried to direct them away from Islamist extremism and rule by Islamic law. Because Israel remained active in the institutions, trade, and

development of these new states, any Islamist influence in them could be monitored and addressed quickly in bilateral dialogues.

The formation of secular governments in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were greatly advanced by these republics' history under the Soviet Union. Decades spent under Soviet-led administration led to the formation of secular leadership elites in Tashkent and Almaty. The Uzbek and Kazakh leaders were brought up in a system in which government was strictly non-religious. Neither President Karimov nor President Nazarbayev wanted to lead nations that would become religious states. In this regard, then, Israel's objectives coincided with those of the Uzbek and Kazakh governments. Although Israel was not much able to influence the specific course of the governments' formation, Israel took advantage of Uzbek and Kazakh inclinations and helped ensure that the republics' secular governments benefited from their relationships with Israel.

DEVELOPMENT OF FURTHER ECONOMIC MARKETS

At the time of their independence, one of things Israel could immediately offer to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was trade and investment. From a starting point of zero, Israeli exports to Kazakhstan rose dramatically; likewise for Uzbekistan. Israel very quickly institutionalized this aspect of the relationships. During the first phase of the relationship with Kazakhstan, Israel signed several trade and investment agreements. Signed agreements and protocols came a little later with Uzbekistan, but Israel still achieved numerous trade, investment, and customs accords.

In Kazakhstan, Israeli trade rose quickly and then dropped, before climbing steadily again. In Uzbekistan, Israeli trade fluctuated as it rose, averaging out over the years. In both cases, Israel secured large new markets for Israeli goods and

services in the agricultural, industrial, and technological sectors. Through these economic and commercial links, Israel was able to offer Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan access to many more markets in North America, the European Union, and other places. Israeli businesses and commercial entities were able to profit from the new markets in Central Asia and the republics' economies were in turn buoyed in the process.

EXPANSION OF ARMS SALES

Israel's goal of supporting its own domestic military preparedness through the sale of second-generation weapons and systems was partially achieved through its relationships in Central Asia. Reliable data on such aspects of the relationships are notoriously hard to come by; however, this study has shown that Israel engaged in security cooperation with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Sales of military equipment, arms, and ammunition comprised 3 percent of Israeli trade with Uzbekistan during the latter 1990s. Similar assistance had been provided to Kazakhstan. However, in terms of overall sales of military materiel, the Central Asian market during the first decade of the republics' independence was significantly smaller than the markets in Africa, Latin America, India, or China. These latter markets and not the markets in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan generated income that was reinvested into research and development of newer weapons systems by the Israelis.

These markets provided Israel with different opportunities. In Central Asia, Israel used security and intelligence cooperation as diplomatic levers. Israel offered the republics coordination and cooperation on a number of issues, including counter-terrorism, Islamist extremism, nuclear smuggling, and Iran. By providing training and equipment to these states, Israel was able to acquire valuable insights into the

national defense establishments of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Furthermore, through such cooperation with Tashkent and Almaty, Israel was able to gain valuable insights into and information on developments in nations throughout the region, including Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan.

Israeli cooperation with the Central Asian states was not as great as was assumed. Because Israel and Uzbekistan were engaged in battles against militant Islam, it was presumed that there must be some grand conspiracy between them. This was far from the truth. In fact, such presumptions fuelled anti-governmental opposition groups and their actions, in turn, actually contributed to the cooperation and collaboration that existed between Israel and Uzbekistan during the ten-year period examined in this study.

PROTECTION OF LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITIES

When the Soviet Union collapsed, it was estimated that some 200,000 Jews resided in Central Asia. Their security and the safety of local Jewish institutions was a serious concern for the Israeli government, although this topic has been examined only briefly in this thesis due to space constraints. Israeli concerns on this issues were allayed significantly by the fact that there was virtually no history of anti-Semitism in Soviet Central Asia. During the first ten years of independence in Central Asia, this continued to be the case, unlike in other areas of the former Soviet Union.

The fate of Jewish communities all over the world is a concern for Israel and, as related in chapter two, the Diaspora plays an essential part in Israeli national security planning. It was vital to Israel that those Soviet Jews who wished to immigrate to Israel were allowed to do so. This was not only important in the

promotion of Jewish rights, but it was also essential to Israel's national security because newly arrived Jews added to Israel's shrinking population.

Israel had very strong ties to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan that no other nation had: ties to the Jewish communities that are part of the Diaspora. Although the Uzbek and Kazakh communities in Israel played little part in the formulation of Israeli policy towards Central Asia, they were a major resource which Israel drew upon. The ability of Israelis to communicate in Russian *and* Uzbek, Tajik, and Kazakh permitted Israel to bypass Moscow, the traditional gatekeeper to the region, and instead go directly to the area and deal personally with the governments and populace there. Although those immigrant communities did not return to invest in their homelands as their former compatriots may have wished, a generation of Russian-speaking, Soviet-educated engineers and scientists were able to provide unrivalled development assistance and technological help to their homelands.

Israeli leaders were always very aware of the effort that the Uzbek and Kazakh peoples had made to accommodate Jewish refugees and evacuees during the Second World War. When Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan became independent nations, they continued to protect their local Jewish communities, and those Jews who wished to leave were allowed to do so. It is now estimated that the Jews in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have remained not because of a lack of resources, but because they simply do not wish to leave. The majority of these are believed to be elderly people who are too deeply tied to their own countries and are not inclined to emigrate and adjust to a new society, culture, and language. As a result, the size of the local Jewish communities that would require Israeli assistance in the event of a crisis is small and diminishing more every year. The remaining communities are well organized and

have many institutions that are supported by the Israeli state and Jews throughout the Diaspora.

THE LIMITATIONS OF ISRAEL'S RELATIONS

In the examination of Israeli strategic policy in Central Asia presented in this thesis, it becomes evident that in the ten-year period following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Israeli policy in Central Asia was at its most successful point and by mid-2001 Israel's relationship with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was at its peak. It appeared that Israeli policy had achieved all its objectives in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and that Israel would continue to reap benefits from these relationships. The strong relationships with both Tashkent and Almaty that Israel had constructed since 1991 would have continued were it not for two events. The first event was creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on 14 June 2001; the second event was the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States.

The zenith of Israel's relationship with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan coincided with the creation of the SCO. The SCO was created in June 2001 by the addition of Uzbekistan to the original Shanghai Five members: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. In the following years, the SCO increasingly tried to create coordinated security and economic policies among its members. Although the SCO was not conceived as a political-military bloc, its creation does mark the beginning of a more nuanced and mature foreign policy being asserted by the Central Asian states.

The second event that presaged the waning of Israel's relationship with Central Asia was the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. The international political dynamics of Central Asia changed dramatically following al-Qaeda's terrorist attacks

in New York and Washington, DC. The subsequent massive American military presence throughout Central Asia reawakened great power interest in the region. In the ensuing 'war on terror' and the American-led campaign in Afghanistan to overthrow the Taliban, the United States negotiated to establish military bases and for over-flight rights with several of the republics in Central Asia. Russia began to re-establish its relationships in the region shortly after, and China increasingly engaged the Central Asian states. These three powers soon began to compete for influence among the states of the region.

In this dramatically altered environment, Israel was soon overshadowed. Moreover, with the regional dynamics so much in flux after September 11th, many of the issues on which Israel had engaged the republics quickly became immaterial. Israel was no longer needed as the liaison in the republics' relationship with Washington. Uzbekistan, for instance, soon engaged in a direct dialogue with the United States on its own.

Israel, as a result of its close relationship with Washington, found its fortunes tied to those of the United States. As the US-led global war on terrorism continued, the resulting backlash against the United States that occurred throughout the Muslim world was directed at American allies as well, especially Israel. As the opposition to the military presence and actions in the Muslim world continued to mount, the language of protest has increasingly taken on religiously and culturally inspired overtones. Islamist extremism has progressively taken hold in the region. This development has had a serious effect on Israel's policies and will continue to complicate its relationships in Central Asia.

LOOKING FORWARD

This thesis has sought to explain in detail some aspects of Israel's foreign policy by examining a specific segment of the international politics of Central Asia during the first ten years after the fall of the Soviet Union. This study cannot address the future of the region; such a topic would be the subject of an entire thesis in itself. Beginning in 1991, Israel created solid relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan that allowed Israel to achieve all its policy goals by the end of the decade examined in this thesis. In the period following the first decade, however, those relationships would change as a result of new factors and circumstances beyond the control of Israel, Tashkent, or Almaty. Although mutually beneficial relations existed from 1991–2001, the relationships turned out to be insufficiently mature and deep to weather the challenges brought by the new international and regional environment in the years that followed.

Based on how the relationships evolved over the first ten years, we can identify several factors which will have an impact on the future of these relationships. Looking forward, Israeli policy in the region must contend with many more factors, including the global war on terrorism, the US-led military presence in the region, threats from and developments in Afghanistan and Iraq, a looming confrontation with Iran, and a greater regional role played by Russia and China. Moreover, the Central Asian states are no longer novices in international relations; both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have developed their own independent and assertive foreign policies. Other factors, such as the pace of the peace process, the level of tensions within Israel's immediate neighborhood, the stability of Israel's neighbors, and national elections in Israel, Central Asia, Iran, and the United States, will have an impact on Israeli strategic policy in Central Asia.

Israel's future relationships with Tashkent and Almaty will also be affected by the fact that the leadership elites in both republics are aging. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have been led by the same men since the Soviet era. During the time period explored in this thesis, Israel dealt primarily with the most senior leadership in each republic. When that generation is gone, Israel will have to have its relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan based on more than just personality politics. Whether these relationships will last will depend on what kind of governments follow the Karimov and Nazarbayev administrations. The possibility of a change in the type of regime must be considered. In this case, the Iranian case may prove instructive. As a result of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, virtually overnight, Israel's closest ally in the region transformed into its most persistent adversary.

Another dynamic that will affect Israeli policy in the region is Israel's assessment of its national security as assured by its great power patron. Currently, Israel's relationship with the United States is a major component of Israeli national security policy. The extent to which Israel feels that its national security is well-protected in the future will have an effect on Israel's relationships with other nations, particularly those in the Muslim world. If Israel is forced to take an even more proactive approach to the international community, this will influence the ways in which Israel interacts with Tashkent and Almaty.

A final factor to consider when contemplating the future of the Israel's relationships in Central Asia is anti-Semitism. Although the region has virtually no history of anti-Semitism, it cannot be assumed that this absence of animosity will continue indefinitely. Anti-Semitism could result from any number of causes in Central Asia, including frustration and dissatisfaction with the ruling orders, anger at perceived injustices in the Muslim world, and increasing intercommunal strife. Were

anti-Semitism to develop in either Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan, it would severely affect Israel's ability to pursue its policy objectives in these republics. Since 2001, Islamist extremism has risen in other areas of Central Asia and will complicate Israeli actions in the region in the future.

ISRAEL'S RELATIONSHIPS WITH NON-ARAB MUSLIM STATES

One of the central elements discussed in this thesis has been Israel's relationship with non-Arab Muslim states. The conclusion of this study raises the question of what does Israel's relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan tell us about the possibilities of relationships with other non-Arab Muslim states? Are the lessons observed from these relationships applicable elsewhere?

The dynamics of Israel's relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are for the most part the result of factors specific to the formation of these republics as independent nation-states. The experiences of Sovietization, Russification, and secularization had dramatic impacts on Central Asia. Islam was not proscribed during the Soviet era but was co-opted by the state as a method to maintain control and prevent the development of alternative systems of rule. The Islam that was practiced in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was secularized, culturally specific, and based upon a loose understanding of the religion's basic tenets. The Soviet education and patronage systems enforced the usage of the Russian language, and local languages were rewritten in the Cyrillic script because of Soviet language policies. Furthermore, during the Soviet period, there was relatively little contact with the larger Muslim world, pilgrimage opportunities were limited, and Islamic literature from abroad was restricted. As a result, the Islam that developed in Soviet Central Asia was unique to

the region. Israel had never interacted with Muslim societies such as those in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

When they became independent, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan had had no experience in independent self-government. Their economies were in a dire state and in need of major capital investment. Israel was able to offer things the new republics needed immediately, and its successes were furthered by three distinctive advantages: a large Russian-speaking population, a sizable immigrant community from the former Soviet Union, and the substantial Jewish community in Central Asia when the Soviet Union fell. Israel was able to offer the new republics trade, investment, development assistance, and access to the West. In exchange Israel was able to affect Uzbek and Kazakh foreign policies to align them more closely with its own.

However, it must be noted that the positions adopted by Tashkent and Almaty were not taken solely as a result of the relationship with Israel. The issues which mattered most to Israel—the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Islamist extremism, and Iran's quest for regional influence—intersected with Uzbek and Kazakh concerns. Both the Uzbeks and the Kazakhs were worried about the rise of militant Islam and Iranian interference. On the issue of Palestine, adopting a neutral position was beneficial to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan because it furthered their interests in the West and did not complicate relations with either the Arab or Muslim worlds. For the republics, positive relations with Israel demonstrated a strong pro-Western orientation, and they used their relationships with Israel to advance their own specific national agendas. In sum, the conditions that existed at the republics' independence were unique and in large part contributed to Israel's successes in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Although not explored in this thesis, Israel's relationships with the Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan are largely similar but are significantly less developed. Israel is a small state with limited resources and chose to direct the use of these resources at the two most critical states for Israel in Central Asia. In the future, Israel will likely try to build stronger relationships with these other republics, especially Turkmenistan; it is possible that Tajikistan would also receive increased attention as Israel continues to jockey with Iran in the region. These relationships would probably not come about at the expense of relations with either Tashkent or Almaty, but rather in coordination with Israeli policy in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. These are not certainties; however, based on the trends evident in Israel's relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan over the first ten years of their independence, they are possibilities.

It is uncertain whether Israel could replicate its successes in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in other regions' non-Arab Muslim nations, except perhaps in Azerbaijan. Although these three were shaped by their common Soviet experience, a number of other factors have had an impact on independent Azerbaijan's development. The Caucasus region is historically and culturally very different from Central Asia; while there may be commonalities between Israel's relationship with Azerbaijan and Israel's relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, they are insufficient to make a significant comparison.

One must conclude, therefore, that the methods and tactics employed by Israel in building its relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan could not be applied elsewhere with equal success. Other non-Arab Muslim countries have developed under dramatically different circumstances, and the role of Islam in society varies widely throughout the Muslim world. The experiences of post-colonialism, struggles

for national independence, and issues of industrialization, nationalism, and the developmental status of civil society all contribute to form unique national identities and situations. Far from being a model of relationship development that can be applied anywhere in the Muslim world, the implementation of Israeli policies that led to its mutually beneficial relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were specific to the circumstances at that time and in those places.

Israel's relationships with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan from 1991 to 2001 were very successful in advancing Israel's traditional foreign policy objectives. Because of concerns that the fall of the Soviet Union would compromise its national security, Israel, through a policy of constructive engagement, created strong relationships with Tashkent and Almaty. As a result of their successfulness, Israeli fears were assuaged and Israel was able to gain two Muslim allies who supported its policies. This, in turn, permitted Israel to act with greater latitude and worked to combat Israel's anti-Muslim image. Israel effectively furthered its own goals without much notice from the outside world. As the region's geopolitical importance continues to increase, so too does the need to fully understand the motivations, intentions, and desires of all the region's past and present players.

APPENDIX ONE: UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTING DATA

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTING RECORD ON RESOLUTIONS RELATED TO THE MIDDLE EAST CONSIDERED HOSTILE TO ISRAEL, 1992–2000

NV: Chose not to vote or was not present

Ineligible: According to Article 19, lost the right to vote due to two full years of
contributions in arrears

Year	Resolution	Date	Subject	Vote Result: Favor, Against, Abstain	US vote	Israel vote	Kazakh vote	Uzbek vote	Iran vote
1992	A/RES/47/12	29-Oct-92	Cooperation between UN and Arab League	119-2-1	Against	Against	NV	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/63[A]	11-Dec-92	Situation in ME	72-3-70	Against	Against	<i>Abstain</i>	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/63[B]	11-Dec-92	Situation in ME	140-1-5	<i>Abstain</i>	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/64[A]	11-Dec-92	Question of Palestine	115-3-40	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/64[B]	11-Dec-92	Question of Palestine	119-2-37	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/64[C]	11-Dec-92	Question of Palestine	152-2-3	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/64[D]	11-Dec-92	Question of Palestine	93-4-60	Against	Against	<i>Abstain</i>	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/64[E]	11-Dec-92	Question of Palestine	146-3-10	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/69[A]	14-Dec-92	UNRWA	136-0-2	Favor	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/69[D]	14-Dec-92	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Higher education	139-0-1	Favor	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/69[E]	14-Dec-92	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Displaced Persons from June 1967 War	138-0-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/69[F]	14-Dec-92	Resumption of ration distribution	103-24-14	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/69[G]	14-Dec-92	Return of 1967 refugees	103-2-37	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/69[H]	14-Dec-92	Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues	100-2-39	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/69[I]	14-Dec-92	Protection of Palestinian refugees	138-2-1	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/69[J]	14-Dec-92	University of Jerusalem "Al Quds" resolution	139-2-1	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/69[K]	14-Dec-92	UNRWA protection	141-2-0	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/70[A]	14-Dec-92	Special Committee on Israeli practices	83-5-55	Against	Against	<i>Abstain</i>	NV	Favor
	A/RES/47/70[B]	14-Dec-92	Special Committee on Israeli practices	141-1-4	<i>Abstain</i>	Against	Favor	NV	Favor

A/RES/47/70[C]	14-Dec-92	Special Committee on Israeli practices	143-1-3	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/47/70[D]	14-Dec-92	Special Committee on Israeli practices	142-2-2	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/47/70[E]	14-Dec-92	Special Committee on Israeli practices	143-1-3	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/47/70[F]	14-Dec-92	Special Committee on Israeli practices	142-1-4	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/47/70[G]	14-Dec-92	Special Committee on Israeli practices	143-2-4	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/47/82	16-Dec-92	Universal realization of right to self-determination	107-22-33	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/47/170	22-Dec-92	Assistance to Palestinian people	155-2-3	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/47/172	22-Dec-92	Israeli settlements	150-3-5	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>

1993

A/RES/48/40[A]	10-Dec-93	UNRWA	159-0-2	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/48/41[A]	10-Dec-93	Human Rights in Occupied Territories	93-2-65	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/48/58	14-Dec-93	Middle East Peace Process	155-3-1	<i>Favor</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Against</i>
A/RES/48/59[A]	14-Dec-93	Situation in ME: Jerusalem	141-1-11	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/48/59[B]	14-Dec-93	Situation in ME: Golan	65-2-83	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/48/78	16-Dec-93	Israeli nuclear armament	53-45-65	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/48/94	20-Dec-93	Self-determination & Independence	101-26-37	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/48/124	20-Dec-93	Non-interference in elections	101-51-17	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/48/158[A]	20-Dec-93	Palestinian Question: Committee on Inalienable Rights	106-3-40	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/48/158[B]	20-Dec-93	Peaceful settlement of Palestinian question	92-5-51	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>
A/RES/48/212	21-Dec-93	Repercussions of Israeli Settlements	143-3-13	<i>Against</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>NV</i>	<i>Favor</i>

1994	A/RES/49/35[A]	9-Dec-94	UNRWA	164-0-2	Abstain	Abstain	Favor	Favor	Favor
	A/RES/49/36[A]	9-Dec-94	Human Rights of Palestinian People	85-2-75	Against	Abstain	Abstain	Abstain	Favor
	A/RES/49/62[A]	14-Dec-94	Question of Palestine	103-2-40	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
	A/RES/49/78	15-Dec-94	Risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East	60-4-100	Against	Abstain	Abstain	Abstain	Favor
	A/RES/49/87[A]	16-Dec-94	Situation in ME: Jerusalem	138-2-7	Abstain	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/49/87[B]	16-Dec-94	Situation in ME: Golan	77-2-70	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/49/88	16-Dec-94	Middle East Peace Process	149-4-2	Favor	Favor	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/49/132	19-Dec-94	Israeli Settlements	133-2-23	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
	A/RES/49/149	23-Dec-94	Right of Palestinian self-determination	147-2-19	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor

1995	A/RES/50/21	1-Dec-95	Middle East Peace Process	148-4-1	Favor	Favor	Favor	NV	Against
	A/RES/50/22[A]	4-Dec-95	Situation in Middle East	64-2-65	Against	Abstain	Abstain	NV	Favor
	A/RES/50/22[B]	4-Dec-95	Situation in ME: Golan	66-2-79	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/50/22[C]	4-Dec-95	Situation in ME: Jerusalem	133-1-13	Abstain	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/50/29[A]	6-Dec-95	Israeli practices in the Territories	69-7-80	Against	Abstain	Abstain	NV	Favor
	A/RES/50/73	12-Dec-95	Risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East	56-2-100	Against	Against	Abstain	Abstain	Favor
	A/RES/50/58[A]	20-Dec-95	Reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons	128-4-43	Against	Abstain	Favor	Abstain	Favor
	A/RES/50/89[B]	19-Dec-95	Financing UNIFIL	104-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/50/129	21-Dec-95	Repercussions of Israeli Settlements	126-2-28	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/50/140	21-Dec-95	Right of Palestinian self-determination	145-2-9	Against	Against	Favor	Abstain	Favor

1996	A/RES/50/22[A]	25-Apr-96	Situation in ME: Jerusalem	133-1-13	Abstain	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
	A/RES/50/22[B]	25-Apr-96	Situation in ME: Golan	66-2-79	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor

A/RES/50/22[C]	25-Apr-96	Situation in Middle East	64-2-65	Against	Against	Abstain	NV	Favor
A/RES/50/28[C]	6-Dec-96	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Displaced Persons from June 1967 War	147-2-0	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/50/28[D]	6-Dec-96	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Higher education	150-0-1	Favor	Abstain	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/50/28[E]	6-Dec-96	UNRWA operations	146-2-3	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/50/28[F]	6-Dec-96	Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues	98-2-48	Against	Against	Abstain	NV	Favor
A/RES/50/28[G]	6-Dec-96	University of Jerusalem "Al Quds" resolution	148-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/50/89[B]	7-Jun-96	Financing UNIFIL	104-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Abstain
A/RES/51/23	4-Dec-96	Human Rights of Palestinian People	104-2-46	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/51/24	4-Dec-96	Question of Palestine	107-2-46	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/51/25	4-Dec-96	Question of Palestine	157-2-3	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/51/26	4-Dec-96	Peaceful settlement of Palestinian question	152-2-4	Against	Against	Favor	NV	NV
A/RES/51/27	4-Dec-96	Situation in ME: Jerusalem	148-1-13	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/51/28	4-Dec-96	Situation in ME: Golan	84-2-71	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/51/29	4-Dec-96	Middle East Peace Process	159-3-2	Favor	Favor	Favor	NV	Against
A/RES/51/48	10-Dec-96	Risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East	129-3-32	Against	Against	Abstain	Abstain	Favor
A/RES/51/82	12-Dec-96	Right of Palestinian self- determination	158-3-12	Against	Against	Favor	Abstain	Favor
A/RES/51/124	13-Dec-96	Assistance to Palestinian refugees	159-1-2	Abstain	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
A/RES/51/126	13-Dec-96	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Displaced Persons from June 1967 War	157-2-1	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor

A/RES/51/127	13-Dec-96	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Higher education	163-0-1	Favor	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
A/RES/51/128	13-Dec-96	Palestinian Refugees	159-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
A/RES/51/129	13-Dec-96	Palestinian Refugees	152-2-6	Against	Against	Favor	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor
A/RES/51/130	13-Dec-96	Palestinian Refugees: al-Quds University	159-3-1	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
A/RES/51/131	13-Dec-96	Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories	79-2-76	Against	Against	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor
A/RES/51/132	13-Dec-96	Application of Geneva Conventions to the Occupied Territories	156-2-3	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
A/RES/51/133	13-Dec-96	Israeli Settlements	152-2-6	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/51/134	13-Dec-96	Israeli human rights practices	149-2-8	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
A/RES/51/135	13-Dec-96	The Occupied Syrian Golan	153-1-9	<i>Abstain</i>	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
A/RES/51/190	16-Dec-96	Palestinian sovereignty in the Occupied Territories	133-3-2	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor

1997

A/RES/51/223	13-Mar-97	Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem	130-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	<i>Ineligible*</i>	Favor
A/RES/51/233	13-Jun-97	Financing UNIFIL	127-2-1	Against	Against	Favor	NV	NV
A/RES/51/ES/10-3	15-Jul-97	Illegal Israeli actions in East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Territories	131-3-14	Against	Against	Favor	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor
A/RES/51/ES/10-4	13-Nov-97	Illegal Israeli actions in East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Territories	139-3-13	Against	Against	Favor	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor
A/RES/52/41	9-Dec-97	Risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East	147-2-14	Against	Against	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor	Favor
A/RES/52/49	9-Dec-97	Committee on the exercise of inalienable Palestinian rights	115-2-45	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
A/RES/52/50	9-Dec-97	Division for Palestinian Rights	113-2-47	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor

A/RES/52/51	9-Dec-97	Special information program on the question of Palestine	155-2-3	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
A/RES/52/52	9-Dec-97	Peaceful settlement of Palestinian question	155-2-3	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	NV
A/RES/52/53	9-Dec-97	Situation in ME: Jerusalem	148-1-9	<i>Abstain</i>	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/54	9-Dec-97	Situation in ME: Golan	92-2-65	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/57	10-Dec-97	Assistance to Palestinian refugees	159-1-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/59	10-Dec-97	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Displaced Persons from June 1967 War	159-1-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/60	10-Dec-97	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Higher education	163-0-1	Favor	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/61	10-Dec-97	Assistance to Palestinian refugees	158-2-3	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/62	10-Dec-97	Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues	158-2-3	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/62	10-Dec-97	Palestinian Refugees: al-Quds University	158-2-3	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/64	10-Dec-97	Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories	83-2-72	Against	Against	<i>Abstain</i>	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/65	10-Dec-97	Application of Geneva Conventions to the Occupied Territories	156-2-3	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/66	10-Dec-97	Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories	149-2-7	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/67	10-Dec-97	Israeli practices in the Occupied Territories	151-2-7	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/68	10-Dec-97	The Occupied Syrian Golan	152-1-7	<i>Abstain</i>	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/114	12-Dec-97	Right of Palestinian self-determination	160-2-6	Against	Against	<i>Abstain</i>	NV	Favor

A/RES/52/207	18-Dec-97	Palestinian sovereignty over natural resources in the Occupied Territories	137-2-14	Against	Against	Favor	Abstain	Favor
A/RES/ES/10-5	17-Mar-98	Jerusalem/Settlements Emergency Resolution	120-3-5	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/52/250	7-Jul-98	Participation of Palestine in the work of the UN	124-4-10	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/53/37	2-Dec-98	Situation in ME: Jerusalem	149-1-7	Abstain	Against	Favor	Abstain	Favor
A/RES/53/38	2-Dec-98	Situation in ME: Golan	97-2-58	Against	Against	Favor	Abstain	Favor
A/RES/53/39	2-Dec-98	Committee on the exercise of inalienable Palestinian rights	110-2-48	Against	Against	Favor	Abstain	Favor
A/RES/53/40	2-Dec-98	Division for Palestinian Rights	111-2-48	Against	Against	Favor	Abstain	Favor
A/RES/53/41	2-Dec-98	Special information program on the question of Palestine	156-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	Abstain	Favor
A/RES/53/42	2-Dec-98	Peaceful settlement of Palestinian question	154-2-3	Against	Against	Favor	Abstain	NV
A/RES/53/46	3-Dec-98	Assistance to Palestinian refugees	157-1-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/53/48	3-Dec-98	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Displaced Persons from June 1967 War	156-2-1	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/53/49	3-Dec-98	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Higher education	160-0-1	Favor	Abstain	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/53/50	3-Dec-98	UNRWA operations	157-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/53/51	3-Dec-98	Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues	156-2-1	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/53/52	3-Dec-98	Palestinian Refugees: al-Quds University	156-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/53/53	3-Dec-98	Special Committee on Israeli practices	86-2-67	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor

A/RES/53/54	3-Dec-98	Application of Geneva Conventions to the Occupied Territories	155-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/53/55	3-Dec-98	Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories	150-3-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/53/56	3-Dec-98	Israeli Practices in the Occupied Territories: human rights	151-2-4	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/53/57	3-Dec-98	The Occupied Syrian Golan	150-1-6	<i>Abstain</i>	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/53/80	4-Dec-98	Risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East	158-2-11	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/53/136	9-Dec-98	Right of Palestinian self-determination	162-2-6	Against	Against	Favor	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor
A/RES/53/196	15-Dec-98	Palestinian sovereignty over natural resources in the Occupied Territories	144-2-12	Against	Against	Favor	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor

1999

A/RES/53/ES/10-6	9-Feb-99	Jerusalem/Settlements	115-2-5	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/54/37	1-Dec-99	Situation in ME: Jerusalem	139-1-3	<i>Abstain</i>	Against	NV	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor
A/RES/54/38	1-Dec-99	Situation in ME: Golan	92-2-53	Against	Against	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor
A/RES/54/39	1-Dec-99	Committee on the exercise of inalienable Palestinian rights	105-3-48	Against	Against	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor
A/RES/54/40	1-Dec-99	Division for Palestinian Rights	197-3-47	Against	Against	<i>Abstain</i>	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor
A/RES/54/41	1-Dec-99	Special information program on the question of Palestine	151-3-2	Against	Against	Favor	<i>Abstain</i>	Favor
A/RES/54/42	1-Dec-99	Peaceful settlement of Palestinian question	149-3-2	Against	Against	NV	<i>Abstain</i>	NV
A/RES/54/57	1-Dec-99	Risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East	149-3-9	Against	Against	NV	NV	Favor
A/RES/54/69	6-Dec-99	Assistance to Palestinian refugees	155-1-2	<i>Abstain</i>	Against	Favor	NV	Favor

A/RES/54/71	6-Dec-99	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Displaced Persons from June 1967 War	1542-2	Against	Against	NV	NV	Favor
A/RES/54/72	6-Dec-99	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Higher education	158-0-1	Favor	Abstain	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/54/73	6-Dec-99	UNRWA operations	154-2-1	Against	Against	NV	NV	Favor
A/RES/54/74	6-Dec-99	Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues	154-2-2	Against	Against	NV	NV	Favor
A/RES/54/75	6-Dec-99	Palestinian Refugees: al-Quds University	155-2-1	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/54/76	6-Dec-99	Special Committee to investigate Israeli practices	84-2-67	Against	Against	Abstain	NV	Favor
A/RES/54/77	6-Dec-99	Application of Geneva Conventions to the Occupied Territories	154-2-1	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/54/78	6-Dec-99	Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories	149-3-3	Against	Against	NV	NV	Favor
A/RES/54/79	6-Dec-99	Israeli Practices in the Occupied Territories: human rights	150-2-3	Against	Against	NV	NV	Favor
A/RES/54/80	6-Dec-99	The Occupied Syrian Golan	150-1-5	Abstain	Against	NV	NV	Favor
A/RES/54/152	17-Dec-99	Right of Palestinian self-determination	156-2-1	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
A/RES/54/230	22-Dec-99	Palestinian sovereignty over natural resources in the Occupied Territories	145-3-6	Against	Against	Abstain	Abstain	Favor

2000

A/RES/54/267	15-Jun-00	Financing UNIFIL	110-2-0	Against	Against	NV	NV	NV
A/RES/54/ES/10-7	20-Oct-00	Jerusalem/Settlements	92-6-46	Against	Against	Abstain	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/36	20-Nov-00	Risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East	157-3-8	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
A/RES/55/50	1-Dec-00	Situation in ME: Jerusalem	145-1-5	Abstain	Against	Favor	NV	Favor

A/RES/55/51	1-Dec-00	Situation in ME: Golan	96-2-55	Against	Against	Abstain	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/52	1-Dec-00	Committee on the exercise of inalienable Palestinian rights	106-2-48	Against	Against	Abstain	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/53	1-Dec-00	Division for Palestinian Rights	107-2-48	Against	Against	Abstain	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/54	1-Dec-00	Special information program on the question of Palestine	151-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/55	1-Dec-00	Peaceful settlement of Palestinian question	149-2-3	Against	Against	NV	NV	NV
A/RES/55/87	4-Dec-00	Right of Palestinian self-determination	170-2-5	Against	Against	Favor	Favor	Favor
A/RES/55/123	8-Dec-00	Assistance to Palestinian refugees/UNRWA	156-1-3	Abstain	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/125	8-Dec-00	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Displaced Persons from June 1967 War	156-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/126	8-Dec-00	Assistance to Palestinian refugees: Higher education	160-0-1	Favor	Abstain	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/127	8-Dec-00	UNRWA operations	157-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/128	8-Dec-00	Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues	156-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/129	8-Dec-00	Palestinian Refugees: al-Quds University	156-2-2	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/130	8-Dec-00	Special Committee to investigate Israeli practices	92-2-61	Against	Against	Abstain	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/131	8-Dec-00	Application of Geneva Conventions to the Occupied Territories	152-2-2	Against	Against	NV	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/132	8-Dec-00	Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories	152-4-0	Against	Against	Favor	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/133	8-Dec-00	Israeli Practices in the Occupied Territories: human rights	150-3-1	Against	Against	NV	NV	Favor

A/RES/55/134	8-Dec-00	The Occupied Syrian Golan	150-1-4	<i>Abstain</i>	Against	NV	NV	Favor
A/RES/55/180[A]	19-Dec-00	UNIFIL	140-3-0	Against	Against	NV	NV	NV
A/RES/55/209	20-Dec-00	Palestinian sovereignty over natural resources in the Occupied Territories	147-2-3	Against	Against	NV	Favor	Favor

Sources: American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise; UN Bibliographic Information System.

APPENDIX TWO: TRADE DATA

ISRAEL–UZBEKISTAN EXPORTS AND IMPORTS, 1992–2001, PER MONTH

ISRAEL–KAZAKHSTAN EXPORTS AND IMPORTS, 1992–2001, PER MONTH

Israeli Exports to Uzbekistan, 1992-2001, per month
(millions of dollars)

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year Total
1992	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.1
1993	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$2.0	\$0.7	\$0.3	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$0.4	\$4.2
1994	\$0.5	\$0.2	\$0.4	\$0.4	\$0.3	\$0.1	\$0.3	\$0.1	\$0.2	\$0.5	\$0.7	\$0.2	\$3.9
1995	\$0.7	\$0.1	\$0.6	\$0.6	\$0.5	\$1.0	\$0.6	\$0.5	\$0.3	\$0.6	\$0.8	\$1.3	\$7.6
1996	\$0.9	\$1.2	\$1.2	\$1.7	\$2.7	\$1.2	\$2.0	\$1.3	\$1.4	\$2.4	\$1.4	\$1.2	\$18.6
1997	\$0.5	\$0.6	\$0.2	\$0.4	\$0.6	\$0.8	\$1.9	\$2.4	\$0.9	\$3.5	\$3.6	\$2.9	\$18.3
1998	\$0.4	\$1.7	\$0.8	\$2.1	\$0.4	\$0.6	\$0.7	\$0.8	\$0.5	\$1.1	\$0.3	\$0.7	\$10.1
1999	\$1.6	\$1.4	\$3.1	\$1.6	\$1.7	\$2.4	\$2.6	\$0.4	\$0.2	\$0.7	\$0.2	\$0.4	\$16.3
2000	\$0.2	\$0.3	\$0.5	\$0.4	\$1.1	\$1.5	\$2.2	\$2.0	\$0.6	\$0.0	\$0.5	\$0.6	\$9.9
2001	\$0.4	\$0.2	\$0.3	\$0.7	\$2.3	\$2.0	\$1.2	\$1.9	\$1.4	\$2.8	\$1.4	\$3.2	\$17.8

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel), *Foreign Trade Statistics Monthly*.

Note: Until May 1992, trade with the former Soviet Union was not broken down by republic.

Israeli Imports from Uzbekistan, 1992-2001, per month
(millions of dollars)

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year Total
1992	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
1993	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.2	\$0.8
1994	\$0.2	\$0.1	\$0.5	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.2	\$1.3
1995	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$0.0	\$0.3	\$0.1	\$0.4	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$1.4
1996	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.3
1997	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.6
1998	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.4	\$0.2	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$1.1
1999	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.4
2000	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.5	\$0.2	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$1.5
2001	\$0.0	\$0.7	\$0.2	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.2	\$0.3	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$2.3

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel), *Foreign Trade Statistics Monthly*.

Note: Until May 1992, trade with the former Soviet Union was not broken down by republic.

Israeli Exports to Kazakhstan, 1992-2001, per month
(millions of dollars)

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year Total
1992	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.2	\$1.8	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.4	\$2.8
1993	\$0.1	\$2.3	\$8.7	\$8.4	\$5.2	\$3.2	\$2.1	\$0.9	\$0.5	\$1.2	\$1.3	\$1.6	\$35.5
1994	\$2.5	\$0.9	\$1.7	\$0.8	\$0.7	\$1.3	\$1.1	\$0.2	\$0.3	\$3.8	\$1.5	\$0.5	\$15.3
1995	\$0.6	\$0.4	\$0.4	\$1.2	\$0.4	\$1.1	\$0.7	\$0.5	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$2.7	\$1.0	\$11.0
1996	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$1.0	\$0.5	\$2.7	\$0.7	\$0.9	\$0.6	\$0.8	\$1.8	\$0.4	\$0.5	\$10.9
1997	\$0.5	\$0.7	\$0.5	\$0.6	\$0.6	\$0.8	\$1.5	\$0.6	\$0.6	\$1.0	\$1.1	\$1.2	\$9.7
1998	\$0.6	\$0.7	\$1.3	\$0.5	\$0.9	\$0.5	\$0.6	\$0.7	\$1.4	\$1.1	\$2.2	\$1.8	\$12.3
1999	\$0.2	\$0.4	\$3.6	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$1.3	\$1.0	\$1.0	\$1.2	\$0.9	\$0.3	\$0.4	\$11.3
2000	\$0.7	\$1.2	\$4.5	\$0.4	\$0.6	\$1.0	\$0.4	\$0.7	\$2.3	\$2.2	\$0.8	\$1.5	\$16.3
2001	\$1.7	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$1.0	\$0.9	\$3.2	\$1.1	\$1.0	\$4.8	\$0.7	\$3.4	\$1.5	\$20.9

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel), *Foreign Trade Statistics Monthly*.

Note: Until May 1992, trade with the former Soviet Union was not broken down by republic.

Israeli Imports from Kazakhstan, 1992-2001, per month
(millions of dollars)

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year Total
1992	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
1993	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
1994	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.2
1995	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.1	\$0.3	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.5
1996	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.2
1997	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.1
1998	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$1.3	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$1.5
1999	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$0.0	\$0.2
2000	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.5	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$0.0	\$0.7
2001	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.2	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.2

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (Israel), *Foreign Trade Statistics Monthly*.

Note: Until May 1992, trade with the former Soviet Union was not broken down by republic.

APPENDIX THREE: ISRAEL'S INTERACTION WITH NON-ARAB MUSLIM STATES: THE ALLIANCE WITH TURKEY

This Appendix looks at the rise of Israeli-Turkish relations. It is included for several reasons: first, because it occurred at the same time as the period covered in this thesis. Second, because Turkey is a non-Arab Muslim state, Israeli-Turkish relations mirror in many ways the manner in which Israel approached the Central Asian republics. Third, the two states focused upon Central Asia in order to expand their areas of influence and to confront mutually identified threats. Moreover, Turkey and Israel worked with the United States in order to advance the interests of all three countries. The final reason for including of this topic is due to the fact that because some of Israel's interactions with the region involved either joint Israeli-Turkish or Israeli-Turkish-American programs and projects, failure to briefly examine this area would result in an incomplete study of the subject at hand.

The development in the 1990s of expanding strategic relations between Israel and Turkey has been termed one of the most significant events to take place in the Middle East during the twentieth century. Turkey and Israel have formed a mutually beneficial strategic relationship (initially secret though subject to countless criticisms) that actively advances the national interests and foreign policy objectives of both nations.

A full and detailed analysis of Israeli–Turkish relations and its impact on the region is much beyond the scope of this appendix. Indeed, many books have already been written on the subject despite the relatively recent development of the expanded ties between the two countries. This appendix will instead focus on the role of the Turkish alliance in Israel’s policies towards Central Asia. Ran’s relationship with Ankara is of particular relevance to Israel’s interaction with the states of Central Asia because of Turkey’s special identity as a non-Arab Muslim state. This Turkic identity was initially perceived in Israel—and elsewhere—as a useful factor in establishing relations with the Central Asian republics.⁸⁰⁰ Furthermore, because Turkey was the first non-Arab Muslim state to have diplomatic relations with Israel, it is worthwhile to examine their relationship: echoes of Israel’s relationship with Turkey can be seen in Israel’s relationships with the Central Asian republics.

The origins and manifestations of the Israeli–Turkish alliance will be explored insofar as they illuminate Ran’s policies regarding the states of the former Soviet

⁸⁰⁰ It is important to note that Tajikistan is not a ‘Turkic’ state.

South. This appendix will provide an introductory overview and analysis of the relationship between the two states and their cooperation in Eurasia in order to provide a background and understanding of Israeli policy in Central Asia. Because both Israel and Turkey are significant allies of the United States, the role of Central Asia within the framework of the Israel–Turkey–United States strategic relationship will also be examined. It is hoped that through a more nuanced understanding of the ties between Israel and Turkey, Israeli involvement with the states of the former Soviet Union will become more lucid.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The relationship between Israel and Turkey has received much attention in past ten years since cooperation between them has rapidly expanded. Although there are a large number of books and articles that examine the nature of the relationship, relatively few explore the historical ties that have existed between Turks and Jews as well as between the Republic of Turkey and the State of Israel.⁸⁰¹ While a thorough exploration of these historic ties is outside the purview of this section, several points are worthy of mention because of their impact on the current relationship.

INITIAL HESITATIONS

When the State of Israel was first created, Turkish leaders were initially hesitant to extend official recognition to the Jewish state. In fact, Turkey voted against United Nations General Assembly Resolution 106 to create the UN Special

⁸⁰¹ For an excellent discussion of the historic background to the Israeli-Turkish relationship, see Amikam Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece: Uneasy Relations in the East Mediterranean* (London, 1987), or Çağrı Erhan, *Turkish-Israeli Relations in a Historical Perspective* (London, 2003).

Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) and they also voted against the UN partition plan for Palestine.⁸⁰²

Ankara's initial apparent backing of Arab and Muslim positions vis-à-vis Palestine should not be overstated; nor should it be misconstrued as expressing any sort of co-religionist sympathy for the Arab position on the future of Palestine. Contemporaneous Turkish politics on issues relating to the Middle East were influenced by many other factors, and viewing the Turkish voting record at the United Nations solely through the prism of Muslim solidarity would distort the historical record. Factors influencing Turkish foreign policy implementation at the time included Turkey's desire to develop closer ties to the West generally and United States specifically; Ankara's objections to the spread of Soviet and Communist influence in the region; suspicions of the emerging Jewish leadership's ideological positions as being of a socialist bent; and an intention to prevent the outbreak of open hostilities in the Middle East.⁸⁰³

ANKARA'S FEARS OF 'ISRAELI SOCIALISM'

Turkish fears of Communist infiltration in the region and suspicions of the emerging Jewish leadership's ideological positions were based upon many issues. These included the new Israeli state's collective farms (kibbutzim), communal cooperative villages (*moshavim*), collaborative factories, and the power of labor unions in domestic Israeli politics.⁸⁰⁴ Israel's participation in international forums such as International Socialist conferences and meetings of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions further added to suspicions that Israel's

⁸⁰² Erhan, *Turkish-Israeli Relations*, pp. 10-11.

⁸⁰³ Erhan, *Turkish-Israeli Relations*, p. 12.

⁸⁰⁴ Erhan, *Turkish-Israeli Relations*, p. 12.

leadership may be sympathetically inclined to support Moscow's agenda. Yet these Israeli connections would aid the Turkish government several decades later.

In 1995, Turkey's customs union agreement with the EU was ratified by the European Parliament after Israeli diplomats lobbied successfully on behalf of Ankara.⁸⁰⁵ (This deliberate strategy of Israeli intervention on behalf of the 'client states' with which it seeks to gain favor has also happened in the case of Turkmenistan, where the Merhav Group has lobbied on behalf of Ashgabat in Washington, DC.) Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres—drawing on his contacts through the Socialist International—personally telephoned several European leftist leaders in Spain, Germany, and the United Kingdom.⁸⁰⁶ Peres was able to successfully lobby Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez, German socialist leader Rudolf Scharping, and British Labor politician Tony Blair to support Turkey's bid to move towards integration with Western Europe. As a show of gratitude, then-Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Çiller "publicly thanked Israel for its efforts and sent Peres a personal note of gratitude."⁸⁰⁷ As this episode illustrates, not only were Turkish suspicions of Israeli ideology unfounded, but Israel's apparent left-leaning policies proved very useful to Ankara in achieving its foreign policy objectives.

Other Israeli government programs such as the *Gadna* (*Gedudei Noar*, "Israeli youth corps run by Ministry of Defense for pre-military training of teenagers"⁸⁰⁸) and *Nahal* (*No'ar Halutz Lohem*, "Fighting Pioneer Youth, part of the IDF which

⁸⁰⁵ Alan Makovsky, "Israeli-Turkish Relations: A Turkish 'Periphery Strategy'?" in *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's Role in the Middle East*, ed. Henri J. Barkey (Washington, DC, 1996), p. 154.

⁸⁰⁶ Makovsky, "Israeli-Turkish Relations," p. 154.

⁸⁰⁷ Makovsky, "Israeli-Turkish Relations," p. 154. Makovsky on p. 239, n. 10 that Israel "did not publicize Peres' efforts on Turkey's behalf." The Israelis kept this secret, and it was not revealed until an MEP complained about the international lobbying and cited Peres' telephone calls as proof.

⁸⁰⁸ The Jewish Agency for Israel, Department for Jewish Zionist Education, *Zionist Glossary*, s.v. "Gadna," <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/100/gloss/index.html#k>.

combines agricultural work and military service”⁸⁰⁹) added to Turkish suspicions. These programs further fueled Turkish misgivings that the emerging Israeli leadership was supporting suspect ideological positions and implementing national programs reminiscent of a “people’s republic.”⁸¹⁰

Interestingly, while the export of the Gadna and Nahal programs to Africa were not very successful,⁸¹¹ in part for several of the same reasons that Turkey had for viewing the programs with suspicion, these programs may actually have been attractive to the peoples of the former Soviet Union. Those reasons that caused the Gadna and Nahal to fail in Africa could very well have been selling points among Central Asians. The apparent paramilitary-collectivist patina of the Gadna and Nahal, including the “long-range social and agrarian transformation”⁸¹² that these programs sought to initiate, may have been appealing to Central Asians in large part because of their experiences as part of the Soviet Union.⁸¹³ While in fact these Israeli programs may have little in common with the Soviet-era Comsomol program, some superficial similarities can be discerned between the two.⁸¹⁴

SHARED EXPERIENCES: IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

Another very important factor that should not be overlooked when considering the development of the relationship between the State of Israel and the Republic of Turkey are the deep cultural and personal connections that existed between the two

⁸⁰⁹ The Jewish Agency for Israel, Department for Jewish Zionist Education, *Zionist Glossary*, s.v. “Nahal,” <http://www.jafi.org.il/education/100/gloss/index.html#k>.

⁸¹⁰ Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece*, p. 44.

⁸¹¹ Joel Peters, *Israel and Africa: The Problematic Friendship* (London, 1992), pp. 6-7, 9-10.

⁸¹² Peters, *Israel and Africa*, p. 10.

⁸¹³ This is based in part on conversations with a former Israeli military intelligence officer, March 2004, London.

⁸¹⁴ This is based in part on conversations with a former Israeli military intelligence officer, March 2004, London.

countries. These connections defy a systematic categorization yet helped cement the relationship between the two states. The fact that “a number of Israeli leaders, such as President Yitzhak Ben Zvi, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Moshe Sharett, had received their education in Ottoman Turkey, had mastered the Turkish language, and were familiar with Turkish traditions”⁸¹⁵ is very important. This allowed Israeli and Turkish leaders not only to communicate in a common language but also to speak the same *political and cultural* language. Being socialized, educated, and brought up in very similar contexts and sharing the same experiences allowed Israelis and Turks—Jews and Muslims—to narrow the apparent gaps that existed between the two peoples. This shared background not only highlighted their similarities but it also worked to reduce their differences. As a result, the two leadership elites were able to accomplish much more than two peoples, of two different religions, speaking two different languages, coming from two different common histories could ever have ever dreamed of accomplishing.

This factor’s role in the development of the relationship between Israel and Turkey underscores the significance of leadership influence, interpersonal connections, and cultural ties. Just as it helped establish ties between Israel and Turkey, the same factor also helps when it came to Israel’s relationship with the Muslim states of the former Soviet Union in Central Asia. Israel’s large Russian-speaking population,⁸¹⁶ composed of many leading Soviet exiles and *refuseniks*,⁸¹⁷ and large numbers of Jewish émigrés from the former Soviet Union, gave Israel a

⁸¹⁵ Erhan, *Turkish-Israeli Relations*, p 18. See also Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece*, p. 58.

⁸¹⁶ Israel has the largest Russian-speaking population in the world outside of Russia itself.

⁸¹⁷ ‘Refusnik’ should not to be confused with the current understanding of the word, taken to mean a member of the IDF—usually a reservist—who refuses to participate in military operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

distinct advantage when it came to developing relationships with the Central Asian states.⁸¹⁸

This firsthand knowledge of the native languages plus cultural fluency allowed Israeli diplomats and businessmen to travel directly to the region and bypass Moscow and Russian mediation altogether. Their ability to communicate in Russian, Uzbek, and Tajik greatly facilitated the advancement of Israel's policies in the region. An excellent example of this can be seen in the successful visit of Israel's last ambassador to the Soviet Union, and first diplomat to the successor states, Aryeh Levin.⁸¹⁹ Levin, the Israeli Ambassador in Moscow at the time of the fall of the Soviet Union, remembered the Persian he learned as a child and was thus able to communicate directly with Tajik speakers while he was in Central Asia.⁸²⁰

THE 'PHANTOM ALLIANCE'

To date the Israeli-Turkish entente "has reached an unprecedented degree of closeness... [and] has become an important element in the politics of the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean areas."⁸²¹ Israel and Turkey have found many ways to cooperate since the establishment of their renewed relationship. Primary collaboration has come in the form of joint military training and cooperation, strategic dialogues, intelligence and security cooperation and coordination, officer exchanges, and military sales and upgrades.⁸²² Such collaborations have also characterized

⁸¹⁸ See Hiro, "Uzbekistan."

⁸¹⁹ Levin, *Envoy to Moscow*.

⁸²⁰ In his memoirs, *Envoy to Moscow*, Levin recounts his childhood and recalls that while on his first official visit to independent Tajikistan as Israel's highest accredited diplomat to Dushanbe, he spoke in Persian on Tajik national television. This interview led to a serious rift between the Tajik and Iranian governments.

⁸²¹ Efraim Inbar, "Regional Implications of the Israeli Turkish Strategic Partnership," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5, no. 2 (summer 2001): p. 48.

⁸²² Brent Sasley, "Burgeoning Military Co-operation Between Turkey and Israel: Together in Otherness" (paper presented at First Annual Graduate Symposium, Conference of Defence Associations

Israel's relationships with the Central Asian republics, at least in part.⁸²³ Strategies and tactical methods focused largely on security issues that were first tested and employed in Israel's dealings with Ankara have been used as a template for dealing with non-Arab, Muslim Central Asia, as shall be demonstrated in later chapters of this thesis.

Israel's 'Phantom Alliance' with Turkey has often been the subject of much commentary; a complete analysis of this relationship is deserving of a separate thesis devoted solely to that subject. Muslim writers and commentators have leveled criticism at their co-religionists in Turkey for engaging Israel while it is still occupying Palestinian territory. Israel and Ankara have nonetheless made much progress in their relationship since rumors about it first began to emerge in 1997.

For all of their apparent differences, Israel and Turkey have much in common. This fact has been termed a "'common sense of otherness' in a region dominated by Arabs and non-democratic regimes."⁸²⁴ Being located in a region predominantly perceived as Arab, Israel and Turkey have both been excluded at times for being non-Arab nations. "Both states are pro-West and pro-US, are committed to democratic and secular values, have similar views toward terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, and are militarily based on US-made equipment."⁸²⁵ Although Turkey is predominantly Muslim, it is considered to be an only nominally Muslim country; politics and religion are two very separate notions in modern Turkey as a result of Kemal Atatürk's massive modernization of the state in the early twentieth century. After 70 years of Soviet-forced secularization and imposed atheism, the Central Asian

Institute, 13-14 November 1998), <http://cda-cdai.ca/symposia/1998/98sasley.htm> (accessed 18 October 2003).

⁸²³ Christopher Boucek, "The Impact of Israeli Foreign Policy in Central Asia: The Case of Uzbekistan," *Central Asia & the Caucasus* 4 no. 28 (2004): pp. 70-81.

⁸²⁴ Makovsky, "Israeli-Turkish Relations," p. 169.

⁸²⁵ Makovsky, "Israeli-Turkish Relations," p. 169.

republics can also be considered only nominally Muslim states,⁸²⁶ where, until very recently, politics and religion were kept separate.⁸²⁷

Both Israel and Turkey are powerful, secular nations that perceive themselves as being Western, not Eastern. It is significant that Israel and Turkey are Washington's greatest political and military allies in the greater Middle East. Turkey, as the only Muslim member of NATO, occupies a special place in American military and security planning. Formerly charged with safeguarding the highly strategic Bosphorus and Dardanelles shipping routes and protecting NATO's southern flank, Turkey remains a significant partner to the United States. During Operations *Northern Watch* over Iraqi Kurdistan (the enforcement of the northern No-Fly Zone) and *Provide Comfort* (delivering assistance to displaced Iraqi Kurds following the end of the 1991 Gulf War) Turkey proved invaluable as host to US and coalition forces. Turkey has also played an important role in providing Muslim peacekeepers for some of the world's recent conflicts, doing so most often under the auspices of the United Nations. Turkish peacekeeping operations have involved major roles in the Korean War (1950-1953) and *Operation Enduring Freedom* (post-Taliban Afghanistan).⁸²⁸ Turkey has also played a significant part in the UN missions in Kosovo (UNMIK) and Bosnia (UNIPTF, 1996-2002, and again in 2003);⁸²⁹ Somalia (UNOSOM-II, 1993 to 1994); Albania; Georgia (UNOMIG); East Timor (UNMISET); Sierra Leone

⁸²⁶ This opinion was related in conversations the author held with a very senior and experienced Saudi diplomat who argued that the Central Asian states are *not* Muslim, and their peoples do not understand Islam, do not understand Arabic, and do not even know how to pray properly, (discussions held in Washington, DC, during the summer of 2001).

⁸²⁷ There has been a Muslim political resurgence in several Central Asian states, partially because religious organizations have been the only avenue open to political dissidents and opponents.

⁸²⁸ Interestingly, Ankara's involvement in Afghanistan predated the 2001 overthrow of the Taliban; it started when Turkey actively supported the Northern Alliance of Ahmed Shah Massoud. Turkey assumed command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in June 2002. Turkey, at the time, was the sole Muslim participant in ISAF. For further information, see the *Council on Foreign Relations, Terrorism: Questions and Answers*, <http://www.cfr.org>.

⁸²⁹ Selcan Hacaoglu, "Turkey Warms up for Peacekeeping, Military Training Missions in Afghanistan," *Associated Press*, 18 October 2001.

(UNAMSIL); Liberia (UNMIL, 2003); Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI); Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC); Haiti (MINUSTAH); and Burundi (ONUB).⁸³⁰ In fact, in 1997 Turkey created a special dedicated peacekeeping battalion capable of responding instantly to requests from the UN Secretariat.⁸³¹ The Turkish parliament authorized the deployment of soldiers and peacekeepers to post-war Iraq following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, but this measure met with significant opposition from the Turkish people; this has not, however, prevented elite Turkish Special Forces units from operating in northern Iraqi Kurdistan.⁸³²

Israel and the United States enjoy one of the closest relationships today. Israel is the largest receiver of American aid dollars and also a major recipient of US military technology and hardware. Israel has been designated a "major non-NATO ally" by the United States, enabling Washington to deal extensively with Israel on a number of military and security issues. Israel and Turkey are also of the same mind when it comes to terrorism. Israel has been relentless in its attempts to eliminate Palestinian violence, just as their Turkish counterparts have fought a long civil conflict against Kurdish separatists.

The relationship between the State of Israel and Turkey has often been labeled the "phantom alliance" by many observers due to the stealthy manner in which the two countries developed their ties. The relationship, in many ways, presages the relationships Israel has created and nurtured with the Central Asian republics.

⁸³⁰ For more information about UN-sanctioned Turkish peacekeeping operations, see <http://www.un.int/turkey/turkey-un.htm#g>.

⁸³¹ For further information, see <http://www.un.int/turkey/turkey-un.htm#g>.

⁸³² Hacaoglu, "Turkey Warms up." Also see Seymour Hersh, *The New Yorker*, "Plan B," 21 June 2004, and Seymour Hersh, *The New Yorker*, "Offense and Defense," 7 April 2003.

THE ISRAELI-TURKISH ALLIANCE

The strategic relationship between Israel and Ankara can best be understood as a tactical decision made by the leadership of each country in order to advance mutually beneficial goals. For both Israeli and Turkish decision makers, the expanded relationship represents a natural manifestation of national interests and foreign policy goals. Israel seeks additional like-minded allies with which to align itself, while Turkey aims to increase its geopolitical reach. Each country views the other as a means by which they can achieve their respective goals.

MILITARY TIES

Both Israel and Turkey have benefited from joint military operations and training exercises,⁸³³ and nations employ large quantities of American-made military hardware. Turkey offers Israel the strategic depth from which it may to strike at targets far from Israel such as northern Syria, Iraq, and even Iran. Israel has also signed a \$668 million contract "to modernize Turkey's ageing fleet of American-made tanks."⁸³⁴ Other deals have been concluded for upgrades to Turkish F-4 warplanes, a deal which has included the controversial transfer of sensitive technologies.⁸³⁵

It is also believed that Israel aided Turkish authorities in the capture of the PKK's (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, the Kurdistan Workers Party) Abdullah Öcalan in Kenya in 1999, and it has been reported that Israel had assisted Turkish security elements prepare an assassination attempt in 1994 on Öcalan that never came to

⁸³³ For example, see Marjorie Miller, "Naval Drill Points to New Mideast Ties," *The Los Angeles Times*, 8 January 1998.

⁸³⁴ Louis Meixler, "Turkey Likely to Stay Israeli Friend," *Associated Press*, 29 April 2002. See also "Turkey completes M-60 tank deal with Israel," *Middle East News Line*, 11 March 2002.

⁸³⁵ Meixler, "Turkey Likely to Stay."

fruition.⁸³⁶ Further intelligence cooperation has come through the “exchange of military intelligence”⁸³⁷ and the creation on Turkish soil of an Israeli “listening post to monitor activities in Iran, Iraq, and Syria.”⁸³⁸

It should also be noted that Turkey has provided military assistance to Central Asia. Military exchanges with Kazakhstan have taken place, and “since 1998, Turkey has provided \$2.9 million in military aid to Kazakhstan.” Turkish plans for continued assistance included training, construction of military facilities, and a planned upgrade for “a military base in the Almaty region.” Turkey has also been encouraged by the United States to supply “military aid to... Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.”⁸³⁹

ISRAEL AND TURKEY IN CENTRAL ASIA

As previously mentioned, the fall of the Soviet Union and the creation of five new independent republics in Central Asia caught much of the world off guard. It was as much of a surprise to the governments in Israel and Ankara as it was to leaders in Washington and London, much less in Tashkent, Dushanbe, and Almaty. The fact that Central Asia was an unknown quantity located at the nexus of numerous security concerns presented many opportunities to national security planners and policy makers in the West, especially in Israel and Turkey.

Turkey shared the American and Israeli perception of an Iranian threat to Central Asian security.⁸⁴⁰ In all three countries, the possibility that Iran could expand its influence was viewed as anathema to their respective governments’ national

⁸³⁶ Mahmut Bali Aykan, “The Turkey-U.S.-Israel Triangle: Continuity, Change and Implications for Turkey’s Post-Cold War Middle East Policy,” *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* XXII, no. 4 (summer 1999): p.15, citing *Milliyet*, 21 January 1998, and *Milliyet*, 22 January 1998.

⁸³⁷ Miller, “Naval Drill Points.”

⁸³⁸ Miller, “Naval Drill Points.”

⁸³⁹ “Turkey provides military aid to C. Asia,” *Middle East News Line*, 18 March 2002.

⁸⁴⁰ “Israel/Turkey—Strategic Ties,” *In Perspective*, Oxford Analytica Weekly Column, 2 August 2001, http://www.oxan.com/columns/wkcol_02082001.html (accessed 22 March 2004).

security. If Teheran was given free reign in Central Asia, the security of the State of Israel would suffer, as would American and Turkish national interests: "It is obvious that the dynamics of the post-Soviet era in the Middle East have drawn Israel, Turkey, and the United States under the same interest umbrella."⁸⁴¹ The fact that Kazakhstan was now an independent republic with nuclear capability certainly raised additional concerns throughout Israel's foreign policy community, as it did in Ankara and Washington.

Because of these threats, Israel sought to ensure that Iranian influence would not take hold in the region. Israel's strategic relationship with Turkey thus came into play as a means for Israel to engage the 'Muslim' republics of Central Asia; Ankara "is a natural ally in Israel's struggle against Iran."⁸⁴² As Neill Lochery writes, Turkey was "viewed by Israel as the gateway to the newly formed Central Asian republics, and more specifically to helping Israel develop political and economic ties with these countries."⁸⁴³

For the State of Israel, the relationship with Turkey offered several major benefits, most notably in the military, security and intelligence fields as outlined above. Yet Ankara's ethno-linguistic and cultural ties with the Turkic peoples of Central Asia were also of great importance to Israeli leaders. At the time, the perception that this would facilitate "easier access to the new Central Asian republics, particularly economic markets for high tech and agricultural equipment"⁸⁴⁴ was very significant. Sometimes overshadowed by the other aspects of the burgeoning Israeli-Turkish entente, it was held at the time that Turkey's ethno-linguistic and cultural

⁸⁴¹ Aras, "Post-Cold War Realities," p. 71.

⁸⁴² Aras, "Post-Cold War Realities," p. 71.

⁸⁴³ Neill Lochery, "Israel and Turkey: Deepening Ties and Strategic Implications, 1995-98," *Israel Affairs* 5, no. 1 (Autumn 1998): p. 45.

⁸⁴⁴ Lochery, "Israel and Turkey," p. 46.

affinities would translate into an advantageous geopolitical posture for Israel within the Muslim states of the former Soviet Union.⁸⁴⁵ In reality, however, “the emerging relationships between Turkey and Azerbaijan and the Central Asian republics are complex and uneven.”⁸⁴⁶ Moreover, “the relative strengths of these republics in comparison to Turkey are being accentuated, as is the desire of these new states to establish direct links with the West, rather than indirectly via Ankara. Impatience is being expressed at the slow rate of progress in the forging of close ties between Turkey and the republics. Some commentators are beginning to suggest that it was all an empty sham, that Turkey is too weak to have more than a marginal impact on these republics.”⁸⁴⁷ The virtues of pan-Turkism and assertions that Central Asia would quickly fall under the influence of Ankara appeared to be greatly exaggerated.⁸⁴⁸

As early as 1992, Israeli leaders were seeking to portray Israel’s—and Turkey’s—importance vis-à-vis Central Asia to political leaders in Washington. This led Israel to encourage the United States “to adopt a policy of confrontation with Iran in the scuffle for influence in Central Asia and to pursue that policy through Turkey and Israel.”⁸⁴⁹ At the end of the Cold War, Israel and Turkey felt there was a very real fear and possibility that the strategic importance to Washington of having Israel and Turkey as allies would decrease. Israel no longer needed to serve as a bulwark against Communist influence in the Middle East. Similarly, Turkey was no longer needed to guard NATO’s southern flank from a possible Warsaw Pact offensive. For

⁸⁴⁵ For further information on this understanding, see Ed Blanche, “Israel and Turkey look to extend their influence into Central Asia,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, August 2001, pp. 35-35, and Daniel P. Klass, “Turkey’s Ties: Increasing Confidence and Regional Influence,” *Middle East Insight*, July-August 2000, pp. 58-60, 62.

⁸⁴⁶ Philip Robins, “Between Sentiment and Self-Interest: Turkey’s Policy Toward Azerbaijan and the Central Asian States,” *Middle East Journal* 47, no. 4 (autumn 1993): p. 609.

⁸⁴⁷ Robins, “Between Sentiment and Self-Interest,” pp. 593-595.

⁸⁴⁸ For more on this subject, see İdris Bal, *Turkey’s Relations with the West and the Turkic Republics: The rise and fall of the ‘Turkish Model’* (Aldershot, 2000).

⁸⁴⁹ “US funds Israeli programs in Central Asia,” *Israeli foreign affairs* VIII, no. 7 (25 August 1992), p. 4.

Israel and Turkey—the first and third largest recipients of US aid money and assistance respectively—there was also a very serious likelihood that Washington would scale back its foreign aid spending after the fall of the Soviet Union to complement the widely expected drawdown in US military spending.

Thus it was a very real priority for these states to maintain their strategic importance to the United States. In 1992, the *Journal of Palestine Studies* wrote that “with Turkey, which like Israel appears to have lost its strategic value to the West as a result of the end of the cold war, trying to sell itself as a new pro-American pillar against Islamic fundamentalism, the idea of an Israeli-Turkish alliance has been integrated into Israeli post-cold war strategy vis-à-vis Washington.”⁸⁵⁰

MUTUAL INTERESTS AND JOINT VENTURES

As noted above, the collapse of Moscow’s control of the republics of Central Asia created new opportunities for both Israel and Ankara. In addition to preventing the spread of Iranian influence and Islamic fundamentalism, the opportunity presented by the creation of independent states in the region offered very appealing entrées for Israel and Turkey to expand their respective areas of influence.

For Israel and Turkey, the newly independent Muslim states of Central Asia posed the possibility of not only creating an economic hinterland, but also giving them ‘strategic depth’ with which to counterbalance respective geopolitical difficulties that both nations were experiencing at the time. Muslim Eurasia represented an opportunity for Israel to expand the number of non-Arab Muslim nations with which it deals in order to offset the Arab-Israeli conflict. Similarly, active involvement in Central Asia gave Turkish leaders the ability to attempt to

⁸⁵⁰ Leon T. Hadar, “The Last Days of Likud: The American-Israeli Big Chill,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 4 (summer 1992): p. 88.

establish greater influence for itself despite its EU membership dilemma: because it was frustrated at not being accepted as an equal member in Europe, conventional wisdom at the time held that Ankara could increase its clout by serving as the gateway for Western economic and political influence in Central Asia.

Israel and Turkey were active in pursuing collaborative projects in the region from the outset: "the cooperation... with respect to the new republics has been limited to setting up barriers to the spread of fundamentalism, making joint investments in agriculture and related sectors, and mutually contributing to the construction of some training facilities."⁸⁵¹ The Israeli academic Amikam Nachmani has commented that the "joint venture the two countries have initiated in Central Asia, in commercial fields (as in production and delivery of energy, development of water sources, development of all kinds of *terra incognita*, etc.)—all have deeper implications."⁸⁵²

In June 1994, Israeli Minister of Economics and Planning Shimon Shitrit traveled to Turkey with a delegation of Israeli businessmen. More than 70 Israeli businessmen accompanied Shitrit to explore investment opportunities in Turkey. During their visit, Shitrit's Turkish counterpart, Minister of Economy Aykon Dogon, told reporters that Israel and Turkey were "discussing possible joint ventures in the Central Asian republics."⁸⁵³ This dialogue was continued at the head-of-state level 18 months later when Turkish Premier Çiller returned the visit.

When Prime Minister Çiller visited Israel in November 1994, one of the primary subjects of her visit was "investment in the Central Asian states." This followed up on Dogon's dialogue with Shitrit. Moscow Radio reported at the time that Israel and Turkey sought to "make joint investments in the former Soviet

⁸⁵¹ Aras, "Post-Cold War Realities," p. 71.

⁸⁵² Amikam Nachmani, "The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie," *Middle East Quarterly* V, no. 2, June 1998, <http://www.meforum.org/article/394> (accessed 14 October 2003).

⁸⁵³ George E. Gruen, "Dynamic Progress in Turkish-Israeli Relations," *Israel Affairs* 1, no. 4 (summer 1995): p. 56.

republics ranging from agriculture to environmental protection” and that “these projects promise much to all sides.” This official dialogue was continued at the private sector level in December 1996 when representatives from 30 Israeli and 100 Turkish businesses met to discuss joint ventures and projects in Central Asia.⁸⁵⁴

The Iranian Foreign Ministry noted Israeli-Turkish joint ventures in Central Asia. According to the Foreign Ministry’s *Iranian Journal of Central Asian Studies*, “the cooperation of Turkey’s Gama firm with Turkmenistan as regards oil involves Israel” and goes on to quote an unidentified Israeli diplomat in Turkey as stating that “Israel seeks to invest in Central Asia and the Caucasus and thus form an alliance with Turkey and hence greater access to the markets of the Newly Independent States.”⁸⁵⁵

The initial Israeli-Turkish cooperation in Central Asia has been augmented by the active involvement of the United States, and Washington has sought to support its two key Middle Eastern allies as they became involved in the states of the former Soviet Union. As early as August 1992, the United States and Israel were cooperating in Central Asia. As part of this cooperation, Washington and Israel “introduced a joint project”⁸⁵⁶ in the region, “with the United States putting up the required financing and Israel providing technology transfer and expertise.”⁸⁵⁷ An Israeli foreign minister official termed the US-Israeli “joint aid program in the former Soviet Central Asian republics a ‘breakthrough’ and an ‘achievement of international dimensions.’”⁸⁵⁸ This deal was for the funding of Israeli agricultural and public health programs in all five republics and was concluded after several days of

⁸⁵⁴ Aras, “Post-Cold War Realities,” p. 71, citing Anatoli Korinsky, “Basbakan Çiller’in Basarili Orta Dogu Gezisi Sona Erdi” (Prime Minister Çiller’s Successful Middle East Trip Came to an End), *Moscow Radio*, 8 November 1994, released by the Turkish General Directorate of Press.

⁸⁵⁵ Maleki, “Turkish-Israeli Relations,” p. 192.

⁸⁵⁶ Aras, “Post-Cold War Realities,” p. 70.

⁸⁵⁷ Aras, “Post-Cold War Realities,” p. 70.

⁸⁵⁸ “US funds Israeli programs,” p. 4.

negotiation between Prime Minister Peres and Richard Armitage, who was then the US coordinator for aid programs in the former Soviet Union.⁸⁵⁹ Notably, Israel had yet to establish diplomatic relations with Turkmenistan at the time.

In relatively short order, Washington expanded this cooperation in the region to include Turkey. George Gruen has written that "the United States government has... created a framework to support Turkish-Israeli cooperation in joint ventures in construction, agricultural technology, rural development, and other fields in the Central Asian republics."⁸⁶⁰ This enlarged scheme was intended to support the involvement of both Turkey and Israel, with each partner utilizing its respective strengths. In this case, Washington would provide the financing and Israel would supply the technology and expertise. The success of these projects would be facilitated by Turkish ethno-linguistic ties to the Turkic states of the region. Further cooperation among the three countries can be seen in collaborative agricultural ventures; together, Washington, Israel, and Ankara have launched several joint projects in the region. On 31 October 1994, the three launched a "new agricultural project in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan."⁸⁶¹

As has been illustrated, the three countries have worked together in the region to advance their common interests. The success of this cooperation was summarized nicely by the US Ambassador to Turkey Marc Grossman in remarks made before the American Turkish Council on 15 January 1995: "There is a great potential in the US-Turkish-Israeli assistance program in Central Asia."⁸⁶²

⁸⁵⁹ "US funds Israeli programs," p. 4.

⁸⁶⁰ Gruen, "Dynamic Progress," p. 56.

⁸⁶¹ Aras, "Post-Cold War Realities," p. 72.

⁸⁶² Gruen, "Dynamic Progress," p. 66. See also Aras, "Post-Cold War Realities," p. 72.

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Uzbekistan National News Agency
Vesti
Voice of America
Voice of Israel Radio
Voice of Palestine (Ramallah)
Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Wafa Palestinian News Service
The Wall Street Journal
Washington Jewish Week
The Washington Post
The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs
Washington Times
Washington Times—International Special Reports
Yediot Ahronoth
Xinhua News Service

ATTRIBUTABLE INTERVIEWS

A NOTE ABOUT SOURCES AND SELECT INTERVIEWS

Throughout the course of my research for this PhD dissertation, I conducted interviews with a number of individuals, including academics, researchers, diplomats, policy analysts, military and security officers, aid workers, oil executives, and intelligence officers (both currently active as well as those who were active during the time period examined in this dissertation).

These conversations were held in London; Washington, DC; Tel Aviv; Jerusalem; Teheran, Iran; Almaty, Kazakhstan; Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan; Dushanbe, Tajikistan; and throughout Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; mostly during my field research, 2003 to 2006. Some of those with whom I spoke did so only on the absolute condition of strict confidentiality. As such, I have not included those interviews in this list. In cases where I was unable to fully detail an interview, I have attempted in the footnotes to roughly identify the person, time, and location.

Alimov, Timur Agzamovich. Conversation with the author, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 19 October 2004. Director, International Cultural Center, Republic of Uzbekistan.

Allagany, Ambassador Gaafar. Conversations with the author, Washington, DC, summer 2001. Former Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations, and previous advisor to HRH Prince Bandar bin Sultan, then-Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United States.

Dyusseмбаев, Rashid. Interview with the author, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 25 January 2005. Editor-in-Chief, *The Kazakhstan Monitor* (Almaty).

Faizullaev, Ambassador Alisher, PhD. Conversation with the author, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 1 October 2004. First Vice-Rector, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Hadar, Jonathan. Conversation with the author, Jerusalem, 30 June 1999. Desk Officer responsible for the Central Asian Republics at the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Jerusalem.

Halevy, Efraim. Telephone interview with the author, 10 April 2006. Director-General of Mossad, 1998 to 2002.

Khalid, Adeeb, PhD. Discussion with the author, 3 April 2004, Social Science Research Council dissertation development workshop held at Princeton University. Department of History, Carleton College.

Khusnidinov, Zukhriddin M., PhD. Interview with the author, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 18 October 2004. Rector, Tashkent Islamic University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Kutina, Jan, PhD. Discussion with the author, Summer 1998, Washington, DC. Department of Chemistry, Global Tectonics and Metallogeny Laboratory, American University.

Kuzmin, Nikolay. Interview with the author, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 24 January 2005. Kazakh political analyst,

Menashri, David, PhD. Conversation with the author, Tel Aviv, Israel, 7 July 1999. Head of Middle Eastern and African History, Tel Aviv University, Israel.

Merano, Ofer. Interview with the author, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 13 March 2006. Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the State of Israel to the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Minovarov, Shoazim. Interview with the author, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 13 October 2004. Chairman of the Committee of Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers, Republic of Uzbekistan.

Munavvarov, Zahidulla, PhD. Conversation with the author, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 5 and 13 October 2004. Chairman of the al-Imam al-

Bukhari Scientific and Educational Center, Tashkent; MP, Republic of Uzbekistan.

Reynolds, Michael, PhD. Discussion with the author, 19 May 2006, Princeton, New Jersey. Assistant Professor of Near East Studies, Princeton University.

Shaffer, Brenda, PhD. Conversation with the author, Jerusalem, 4 November 2005. Formerly Research Director, Caspian Studies Program at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Sneh, Ephraim, MD, MK. Telephone conversation with the author, Tel Aviv, Israel, 4 November 2005. Member of the Knesset, chairman of the subcommittee on defense planning and policy, and chairman of the subcommittee for security perception. Retired General of the Israel Defense Forces, four-time minister of health, minister of transportation, and deputy minister of defense.

Tukumov, Yerkin. Interview with the author, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 26 January 2005. Deputy Director, Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies, Almaty, Kazakhstan.



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